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*Amicus Humani Generis*

# THE JAPJI SAHIB

A MASTERPIECE OF GURU NANAK

WITH

**The Hindi Text, English Translation &  
a Copious Commentary**

ALSO

## DISCOURSES ON THE BHAGWADGITA

RELATING TO

**Important Problems of Life**

BY

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**To Those Who Seek**



किब सचियारा होईये किब कूढ़े तुटै पालि ।  
हुकमि रजाई चलया नानक लिखिया नालि ॥

जपुजी । १, (५-६)

How then to attain truth and how to break  
the barrier of untruth ?

By obedience of His Command as it is  
ordained, says Nanak.

Japji I, 5 & 6.

मत्कर्म न्मत्परमो मङ्गलः सङ्गवर्जितः ।  
निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥

भगवद्भगीता । ११, (५५)

He who does actions for My sake, looks on  
Me as his supreme goal, surrenders himself to  
Me, and freed from attachment, is the lover of all  
beings, he cometh unto Me, O Pandava.

Bhagwadgita XI, 55.



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## PREFACE

In the course of my religious studies I chanced to read the well-known Sikh Scripture, the Japji Sahib. I loved it at first sight, and desired to know it more. There were, however, difficulties in the way of a proper grasp of it—the difficulties due to its special vocabulary and dialectic varieties, its compressed style, its peculiar poetic diction, and above all, its deep abstruse topics conveyed in non-literary language. Still, undaunted by these difficulties, I tried my best to overcome them, encouraged and supported as I always was by my zeal and enthusiasm for the work. I read and re-read it with what help I could get from the extant literature, translations, commentaries (English and Vernacular) and cognate works. I also read it in the light of that Book of Books, the Bhagwad-gita, my *Vade Mecum*, with which I find the Japji in perfect accord, and by means of which I have profusely illustrated the text. The more I read, the more I admired; the more I understood, the more I wondered; and the more I reflected, the more I sat amazed.

The field, though not untraversed, could yet not be supposed to have been altogether exhaust-



ed. So I embarked on a venture of my own, in this inexhaustible theme. And if the result of my humble labours in seeking the solutions of the difficulties that occurred to me can in any way help a single wayfarer similarly circumstanced, I shall deem myself amply repaid.

I must, however, mention as a mark of respect and gratitude, the authorities I consulted. They are the well-known voluminous commentary of the Adi Granth Sahib (Vernacular), published by the Faridkot Darbar, Macauliffe's English translation of the Japji in his "The Sikh Religion," Dr. Caleb's metrical translation (English) of the Japji, Prof. Teja Singh's translation and commentary (English and Vernacular) of the Japji, and also a host of other vernacular translations and commentaries of the Japji that I could lay my hands on.

As regards the Discourses on the Bhagwad-gita, I may say that these are the result of my life-long study of the various subjects therein dealt with.

With trembling heart I send out this my humble work, my first essay in a matter of such delicate nature, and I place it on the altar of the Guru. May He bless us all. Amen.

MEHTA UDHODAS

# INTRODUCTION

## I. Preliminary

(The Japji Sahib is a poem composed by Guru Nanak Sahib. It is placed first in the Shri Adi Granth Sahib, the Sikh Scripture, though it is the last composition of the Guru. The poem is a lengthy one. It consists of a prologue including what is known as the *Mul-Mantram* (the fundamental invocation) and a *Shloka*, the thirty-eight stanzas called the *Pavris* (steps of a ladder) and one closing *Shloka* (a form of poetical composition) as an epilogue.) Each stanza is divided into lines varying in number from 4 to 26. The word *pavris* occurs in XXXII, 3, where the Path is evidently likened to a ladder, by scaling the steps of which the bride (the aspiring Ego) goes merrily along to the Bridegroom (the Logos). That may perhaps account for the stanzas being called *pavris*, steps of the Divine ladder as it were.

(Japa, which literally means recitation, is the most ancient form of Divine worship by means of a slow and silent recitation of God's name or any sacred formula such as *Aum*, *Gayatri*, etc.) The word occurs in the beginning of the poem, just after the *Mul-Mantram*, and may be said to give it its name.

The topic of the Japji is, according to tradition, based on the conversations which the Guru is said to have had with the Siddhas (sages) on Mount Meru the *Sumer Pravat*. Tradition fixes the place at the highest elevation of the Himalyan ranges of gold, where, it is supposed, resided, or perhaps still reside, the adepts in the spiritual lore. These conversations, it is said, related to the topics of spiritual interest about which the Siddhas questioned the Guru, who by way of answers to their queries gave the whole of the Japji. The queries are not stated, but are implied from the composition. Tradition asserts and elucidates these questions in commenting on the great teachings found in the Japji. The Japji is now used as the Lord's morning prayer, recited from memory or otherwise by devout Sikhs.

The language of the Japji is the Punjabi of its day (15th Century), with an admixture of peculiar and obsolete words and idioms. In style it generally approaches the *Sutras* of the Sanskrit literature for being concise and elliptical. The task, therefore, of making a meaning clear and of supplying the appropriate verb, case or preposition that is often omitted, is not an easy one. The difficulty of the task is increased by the fact that the topic deals with abstruse philosophical subjects. Imagination and

intuition, besides knowledge of the topic concerned, as of the traditions and other writings of the Great Guru, prove to be the great guide.

Sanskrit words and terms in the wide and varied sense are, considering the nature of the subject in hand, naturally profusely used, though they are at times not easily discernible, either on account of the Punjabi garb due to Punjabi accent and script (Gurmukhi), or on account of the vulgar or corrupt forms which they may have assumed when first embodied in Punjabi. Persian words too, with variations in form due to Punjabi pronunciation and spelling, are not infrequently used.

Sanskrit and Persian words of about the same shape and form are used at times, when it becomes a difficult question to take them in one or the other sense, the context lending colour to either meaning. Guru Nanak, who must be supposed to have been fairly conversant with both these languages and their literatures, may have certainly made appropriate use of his words, but an unwary reader, at this distant date, is apt to fail in giving a word the right meaning, in the right place, and thus rob the elegant composition of much of its intrinsic worth and charm. To illustrate: the Japji as it stresses the two seemingly

antithetical but important doctrines of the Theology of human responsibility of action on the one hand, and of Divine Grace on the other, uses a single word, *Karma*, for both, which, belonging as it does to both the Sanskrit and Persian vocabularies, is used in the Sanskrit sense (of Action) for the former, and in the Persian sense (of grace and mercy) for the latter. The use of this word in such different senses, according to our reading, would appear from the following:—

Karma used in the Sanskrit sense:

1. "By actions (*Karmi*) one attains the garment and by Divine grace, the salvation." (IV, 6).
2. "Without actions (*Karma*) nothing is achieved." (VI, 2).
3. "All these lives are judged by their actions (*Karmi*)." (XXXIV, 6).
4. "The characteristic of the sphere of action (*Karma Khand*) is power." (XXXVII, 1).

Karma used in the Persian sense:

1. "God's Mercy (*Karma*) is beyond description." (XXV, 1).
2. "Invaluable are His mercies (*Karma*) and invaluable His commands." (XXVI, 8).

3. "Man has his gifts only through His grace (*Nazar*) and mercy (*Karmi*)." (XXIV, 16).
4. "And by His grace ( *Nazar-i-Karma* ) they receive distinction." (XXXIV, 9).
5. "Only those work thus who have His gracious (*Nazari*) mercy (*Karma*)." (XXXVIII, 6).

The words *Karma* and *Nazar* placed in juxtaposition in each of the last three lines (especially in the last line where they are placed in a somewhat Persian construction) have in Persian the same meaning—mercy or grace—and have been rendered accordingly. But some would take them differently, to wit, *Karma* in the Sanskrit (Action) and *Nazar* in the Persian sense (Mercy or Grace), so as to convey the idea that action and mercy or grace—both, not mercy or grace only—are meant. Both the renderings would seem feasible, but there is much to be said in favour of the one adopted here.

As a matter of fact, *Karma* may quite easily be used either in the Sanskrit or in the Persian sense in XXV, 1, with the following effect:—

*Sanskrit sense*.—God's action ( *Karma* ) is beyond description.

*Persian sense*.—God's mercy (*Karma*) is beyond description.

Again, *Karma* is used in a particular sense meaning "Description," probably as a popular Punjabi word in XXXV, 2: thus: "Now will I give a description (*Karma*) of the region of Divine Knowledge."

And again, *Sarm* is used as a Persian word (*Sharam*) meaning "modesty," in XXXVIII, 1, while it is used as a Sanskrit word in XXXVI, 3, meaning "Happiness" (lit. Haven, as in the Bhagwadgita XI, 25), although a writer taking it akin perhaps to the Sanskrit *Preshram* would render it as "endeavour," in both places.

*Pát*, in XXXV, 9, is used as a Persian word (*Pátsháh* or *Bádsháh*), meaning a king, while it is used by some as a Sanskrit word meaning foot or footman, both constructions equally suiting the context.

*Pát* with shortened *à* is used as a Sanskrit word synonymous with the Persian (*Sarm* or *Sharam*) with which it stands in XXVIII, 1, meaning "modesty." It is also used in another Sanskrit sense, meaning "the Bridegroom" (as *Pat* or *Pati*) in XXXII, 3, although some writers use it for "honour" in the latter place, in which sense it is used also in XXV, 2, as a Sanskrit, or rather Hindi, popular word.

*Bekar*, in XXV, 5, is the Persian word meaning "Idle," but is easily confounded with the Sanskrit *Vikara* "frivolous."

There is a Persian word *Amar* used in the sense of "ruling over", in XVIII, 3, which could easily be confused with the Sanskrit word of the same form, meaning "Immortal."

An obscure word "*Āth*," (with the elongated *ā*) is used in XXI, 7. The meaning of this word is not easy to make out. It may possibly be the Sanskrit *Ath* (with short *a*), used as a word of praise, synonymous with *Swaste* preceding it.

So much for the language difficulty, though examples could be multiplied.

The modern mind, used to its analytic habits of thought, is apt to miss the links between the different lines of a single stanza without the arrangement of the subject into divisions and headlines. An attempt has, therefore, been made by us to divide the whole poem into chapters and to give a heading to each stanza according to its predominant note or sense. This makes the *Contents*, given elsewhere, which, it is hoped, will assist the intelligent grasp of the subject, and may be appreciated, as a novel feature of this compilation.



Below we give only a brief part of the "Contents" showing the Chapters only, with their Headings, *viz*:

Prologue	... Invocation, etc.
Chap. I	... Worship
Chap. II	... The Quest
Chap. III	... The Divine Plan
Chap. IV	... Human Responsibility
Chap. V	... Inscrutable Providence
Chap. VI	... Formalism and Sectarianism
Chap. VII	... Jnana (Wisdom)
Epilogue	... <i>Shloka</i>

To facilitate the study of the Japji in English along with the original, a short glossary has been prepared to explain certain peculiar words used in the text that could not be explained in the Commentary.

This compilation contains, at the end, certain discourses on the Bhagwadgita which, together with the copious illustrations from the Bhagwadgita in the comments on the Japji, may be expected to prove helpful in the study of both the Bhagwadgita and the Japji, as the two are so well allied to each other in their common theme and purpose, the Bhakti Yoga.

## II. The Japji Teachings

The Japji aims at praising the One True Almighty God by speaking of the vastness of His creation, His Divine plan and purpose, which, as is pointed out again and again, is incomprehensible and indescribable. Man can know something of Him but not the whole. "How shall I invoke Him, how praise, how describe, How know Him ?" (XXI, 15) are the questions raised, and the answer follows. Despite the fact that "all talk about Him, claiming to be each wiser than the other," what can man know but that "He is the Great Lord and that all happens according to His command ?") More it is not possible to say (XXI, 16-18). "His description cannot be exhausted, though millions describe Him in millions of ways." (III, 9) "He who attempts to describe Him repents." (XII, 2), (XXXVI, 6). "Should any impious one claim to have exhausted His description, he must be reckoned as the stupid of stupids, (XXVI, 25). "His description has no end. To describe Him is as hard as it is to break steel," (XXXVII, 14 and 18).

The best and the consistest description of Him is that given in the *Mul Mantram* at the very beginning of the Japji :

"One Omkar, True name, Creator, Spirit, Devoid of Fear and Hatred, Beyond Death and Birth, Self-existent."

As stated before, due emphasis is laid in the Japji on the two Doctrines of universal theology, namely Human Responsibility and Divine Grace, on which hinges the whole Divine Plan. Man has his limited free will of course. "Without action nothing is achieved." (VI, 2).<sup>1</sup>

"Devotion to Thee is not possible without practising virtue," (XXI, 6). "All these lives are judged by their actions," (XXXIV, 6). "All depends upon action." (Shloka, 4).

But this is not the whole of the law. "By Action man attains the garment, (worldly prosperity, good birth, etc.) only, but salvation (the *summum bonum* of existence) comes only by His Grace." (IV, 6). "By His Grace alone is He found, all else is false: all else is vanity." (XXXII, 5-6). "One has not the power of finding the way of release from the world. Only God who has the might does all. None is high or low to Him." (XXXIII, 6-8). "Just is He and just is His court, where the pious and the good stand decorated and by His Grace and Mercy receive distinction," (XXXIV, 7-9), "Only those

who work thus" ( that is, only with a desire to know God ) "have His Grace and Mercy." (XXXVIII, 6).

To a Lover of Truth and Reality nothing is so abhorrent as the exaggerated importance given to forms, or as the regard for mere forms independently of the spirit underlying them. Hence the Guru's outspoken language in such matters, which may sometimes offend the so-called religious people tied to forms and caring more for the shadow than the substance. Take his homily to the form-ridden Yogis of the day, what a home-thrust it was ! "Let contentment be your ear-rings, and modesty your begging-pouch. Besmear your body with the ashes of meditation. Let the memory of death be the chequered rug you wear ( as a memory thereof ). Observe the rule ( *Jugat* ) of keeping the body chaste like a virgin ; and let Faith in God be your staff. Let universal brotherhood be your creed and not the *Ayeepanth* ( a narrow cult ) and let Divine knowledge be your "Bhandara" (Feast) (XXVIII—XXIX).

And to those who depend only on externals, the warning so sweetly conveyed, for example, in the case of pilgrimage, is "I may bathe at the place of pilgrimage if I possess Love for God ;

without such Love what need to bathe" ? (VI, 1). Again, "when a garment is polluted by filth, it is cleansed with soap, when the mind is soiled by sin, it is cleansed with God's name." (XX, 3—6). "Pilgrimages, penances, compassion and alms-giving bring in the merit (*Punya*) of but an oilseed ; hear God, have faith in Him and entertain Love for Him, this is the inner place of pilgrimage at which you should bathe, washing off the mental dirt." (XXI, 1—4). Not that the principle of pilgrimage, charity, etc., is in any way deprecated, which it can never be, for it must abide so long as Holiness in Religion abides; but that the need of keeping the outer and inner parts of man in harmony with each other can not be too much emphasised. As to the need for a practical, austere and self-disciplined life as a step to spiritual culture, see the immortal formula so beautifully given in a simile of the mint. "Continence is the furnace and patience the goldsmith, pure reason is the anvil and the Vedas are the tools. Fear of God is the crucible, and nectar the substance to be moulded. Thus is the Holy word coined at the Mint of Truth." (XXXVIII, 1—5).

As to the purpose of life, as is most vividly and forcefully laid down throughout, it is nothing

but the worship of God, and that worship of Him in Love. "True is the Lord and True is His name. He is described in boundless Love." (IV, 1). "At the life-imparting morning hour meditate on the greatness of His True name." (IV, 5). "Let us sing of Him, hear Him and be in Love with Him." (V, 5). All the vanities of life are nothing compared to this goal. "One may attain the age of four Yugas or even ten times that, age ; he may acquire fame throughout the nine continents, and become a world-leader, and winning a high name, gain the esteem and admiration of the world, yet if he wins not a place in the sight of God, he is to be counted as nothing—only a worm of worms and a sinner of sinners." (VII, 1-5).

And what is the process of this worship ? Here also the language is as emphatic as it is unequivocal. "The Guru has taught me one thing: He is the all-giver, He should never be forgotten." (V, 10-11). "Should one possess lacs of tongues for this, and twenty times as many lacs for that, one should with each tongue repeat the name of God lacs of times." (XXXII, 1-2).

And with what effect ? Here again it is said: "On this path of the Bridegroom let one mount the stairs and become one with God," or be in tune

with Him. (XXXII, 3). "Those who meditate on His name finish their task, their looks are bright, they are saved and they save many others along with them." (Shloka, 5).

This remembering and repeating of the name of God is not, however, merely a theoretical or mechanical ceremonial. In order that it may have its full fruition, which is to become one with God, it is necessary that the whole life of man should be touched to the quick by this recitation, so that the one who does so depend, wholly and solely on Him, absolutely surrenders his will to that of God, or, as stated in the forceful and decisive language of the Japji, ever abides by His dictates or commands. (I, 6).

The nature of this command is well explained. It is this command by which "are all manifestations produced," by which "Individuals come into being," by which "they become high and low, receive pleasures and pains decreed for them," by which "some are gifted with His Grace and some are left to wander. All are subject to the command, none beyond it." When a man understands this command, he ceases to talk of his limited self" (II), and begins to understand the great Divine Plan that works not only one but uncountable universes.

"There are lacs of nether and higher regions which have not been traced by any knowledge, nor by the Vedas or other Holy Books of religions" (XXII). "Infinite are His works." "Infinite are His manifestations and infinite their bounds" (XXIV, 1 to 6). "Many winds, fires, waters are there and many Krishnas and Shivas. Many Brahmas are there, building lives of various forms and colours. Many worlds of action and Merus are there, and many Dhruvas and Sermons; many Indras, Moons and Suns and many worlds and climes," etc., etc. (XXXV).

So there are in this world the good as well as the bad, and God alone knows well how best to deal with all. Innumerable are the persons engaged in recitations and devotions, reading the Vedas and Holy Books, undergoing Yoga practices, reflecting on Divine attributes, etc., etc. (XVII); and innumerable are the ignorant persons, thieves, felons, oppressors, and cut-throats, etc., etc. (XVIII). But God knows the destiny of them all according not only to their outer, but also their inner actions, which can only be known to Him alone, and so man gets "what He ordaineth" (XIX, 9), and for the matter of that, "What pleaseth Thee alone is good" (XIX, 14).



After a man is thus perfected by means of his actions coupled with the Divine Grace, he is adept in both *Jnana* and *Bhakti*, he has achieved redemption and he is said to have entered the Realm of Truth (*Sach Khand*) (XXXVII, 11.) The characteristic of this state is that he then lives not for himself but for the service of mankind. He is then truly the man of action, the hero, the warrior, the leader, the teacher (Guru); and having no end of his own to serve, he is engaged in helping others to achieve salvation and in living in tune with God, and he ever does His will. Such men are the flower of humanity in whom the Divine Plan accomplishes its purpose. The object of the Japji teachings is to produce a harvest of such men whom it calls in a long eloquent description (VIII-XVI) by various names: Siddha, Buddha, Nath, Sheikh, Peer, Patshah and Pancha (representative men). And Guru Nanak, in compassion for humanity, has given this teaching to the world, with the insight of one who has himself seen the Truth and not simply heard it from others, and whose very life has been an embodiment of that Truth. The Japji is thus the "Garland of Flowers" and the "Necklace of Pearls," with which we might well decorate this life, should we desire to reach life's goal.

In the commentary an attempt has been made to illustrate these teachings of the Japji with reference to those of the Bhagwadgita, and this forms the novel feature of this compilation. The Bhagwadgita, which embodies the essence of the spiritual lore ( *Adhyatmic Vidya* ) as given in Hinduism through the Vedas, Upanishads, Darshanas, etc., finds its full echo in the Japji and other compositions of great Nanak, who sang of the Ancient Wisdom in his marvellous works even as Shri Krishna did in the "Song Celestial." And Guru Nanak, as much as Shri Krishna, sang with equal charm and effect to draw the erring world to its destined path of Duty (*Dharma*) in the midst of its warring clash of interests and the trials and tribulations of active life.

### III. Guru Nanak and Sikhism—A brief Sketch.

Guru Nanak, or Baba Nanak Shah, was born in 1469 A. D., at Talwandi, the present Nankana Sahib, near Lahore. His father Lala Kalu Ram, a Bedi Khshatri, was the *Modi* ( accountant ) to the Chief of that place. The Guru laboured to lead the people to a practical religion, to a pure worship of God and love of mankind. He lived in the reign of the Mughal King Babar. He

is known as the founder of what is called the Sikh religion, though he never claimed to found a new sect or religion, beyond stressing the worship of the one invisible God. He was the contemporary of John Knox, Calvin and Luther, and not unlike them, he devoted the best part of a long life to pointing out the absurdity of depending for salvation on ritualism, which people so much emphasised. He called upon men to rely solely on the protection of the Lord who was always with them and whom they could easily please by right thinking and right living. Accompanied by his family bard, Mardana, his devoted disciple (Sikh), he travelled far and wide within and without India, singing the Divine Glory to the accompaniment of the harp. Many hated him for his levelling creed of the equality of all men in the sight of God, in disregard of the caste system that prevailed; but many of the depressed and lowly found great joy in his new message that went to elevate their lot, and they clung to him as his disciples and followers. A brotherhood of Sikhs (disciples) was thus formed. For his high life, lofty character, cosmopolitan views and universal love, he gathered round him all and sundry, who loved him dearly. He left this mortal body in 1540 A.D., at the ripe old age

of over 70, acclaimed as a great saint and messenger of God who came to serve suffering humanity.

He left two sons, but his life's work he bequeathed not to them but to a worthy disciple of his choice, Bhai Lehna, who became his successor in spirit, under the name of Angad. Thus the church of sainthood, founded by Baba Nanak, was continued from Guru to Guru. Guru Angad was succeeded by Guru Amar Das and the latter by Guru Ram Das. Guru Arjan, the 5th in succession, distinguished himself by constructing the famous Golden Temple at Amritsar, the foundation stone of which was laid by Hazrat Mian Mir (of Mianmir near Lahore), the premier Muslim saint of the time—a significant fact in evidence of the Hindu Muslim *entente*.

Guru Arjan also compiled the *Adi Granth Sahib*, the Sikh scripture, in which, in addition to his own compositions, he included not only the writings of his four predecessors on the *Guddee*, but those of the Hindu and Muslim saints also. That gave stability and unity to the teachings of the Sikhs.

But on account of their ultra-catholicity, the teachings of the Sikhs aroused the enmity

of the orthodox, both Musalman and Hindu. Guru Arjan was thrown into prison, where he died.

His son and successor, Guru Har Gobind, was the first to transform the peaceful believers into valiant warriors, by infusing a military spirit into his followers and fighting several battles with the Mughal Government, to the defeat and great discomfiture of the latter. Gurus Har Rai and Hari Krishan were the seventh and eighth in succession, respectively.

Guru Tegh Bahadar, the ninth in succession, fell into conflict with the Emperor Aurangzeb, who shut him up in a prison in Delhi, and eventually, in 1675, the Guru was beheaded. Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth and last Guru, who in a way completed the task begun by Guru Har Gobind. The purely religious body was thus changed into a military clan, under the name of the *Khalsa Panth*, adopting the heroic name of "Singh," a lion, in place of "Sikh," a disciple. He was also involved in wars with the Emperor Aurangzeb who, instigated by the Hindu Hill Rajas, sent military expeditions against him at his fortress of Anandpur. He died in 1708 A. D.

Guru Gobind Singh wrote the *Dasma Badshah ka GRANTH* (Book of the 10th Guru), which, besides treating of religious subjects, contains the history of his exploits. The Sikhs hold it in equal veneration with the *Adi Granth Sahib*. It is also related that on one occasion, when the copy of the *Adi Granth Sahib* was withheld from the possession of Guru Gobind Singh by Baba Dhira Mal, the Guru reproduced the whole volume from memory. He also included in the *Adi Granth Sahib* the compositions of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur.

After the death of Guru Gobind Singh the Sikhs gradually yielded to the superior power of the Mohammedans. But after Nadar Shah's invasion of India and his return to Persia, the Sikhs again concentrated their power and subdued Lahore. In 1792 Ranjit Singh overpowered all the Sikh principalities that had been established during this time at the decline of the Mughal Government, and established himself as a despotic ruler of the Sikhs with the title of Maharaja. The territory of the Sikhs then comprised the whole of the Punjab, part of Multan and most of the country between the Jamna and the Sutlej. Ranjit Singh died in 1839, and

anarchy followed. From that time onwards, the Sikhs came in conflict with the British Government and after several battles, the Sikh power was completely broken in 1849. The Punjab was then annexed to the British Empire in India and Maharaja Ranjit Singh's son, Maharaja Dalip Singh, was given an annuity in London.

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# **THE JAPJI SAHIB**



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(*Prepared for easy grasp, vide Introduction, page 13*).

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- XXXVI. Bliss and Wisdom.
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- XXXVIII. Self-discipline. (A Formula)
- Epilogue. — Shloka—Redemption.**

१ॐ कार सतिनाम कर्ता पुरखु निरभउ निरवैरु  
अकाल मूर्ति अजूनी सैभं गुरप्रसादि ।

## ॥ जपु ॥

आदि सचु जुगादि सचु ।

है भी सचु नानक होसी भी सचु ॥ १ ॥

१

१—सोचै सोचि न होवई, जे सोची लख वार ।

२—चुपै चुप न होवई, जे लाय रहा लिव तार ।

३—भुखिया भुख न उतरी जे बंन पुरीया भार ।

४—सहस सियाणपा लख होहि त इक न चलै नालि ।

५—किव सचियारा होईयै किव कूडै तुटै पालि ।

६—हुकमि रजाई चलणा नानक लिखिया नालि ॥

# THE JAPJI

## Prologue.

1. *The Invocation*—One *Omkar*, True Name, Creator, Spirit, Devoid of Fear and Hatred, Beyond Death and Birth, Self-existent, *Gur Prasadi*.
2. *Title*—Japu.
3. *Shloka*—The True One <sup>he</sup> is in the beginning and before the beginning. The True One is here and now and shall be for ever, says Nanak.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Worship.

#### *I—Obedience.*

1. He is not <sup>by</sup> ~~by~~ <sup>thought</sup> ~~comprehended~~ though one may think of Him lacs of times.
2. He is not <sup>known</sup> ~~by~~ <sup>known</sup> ~~known~~ though one may remain in silence long and deep.
3. Hunger for Him is not appeased by acquiring this world's goods, though one may possess a multitude of kingdoms.
4. Wit and learning vast and deep avail not.
5. How then to attain truth and how to break the barrier of untruth?
6. By obedience of His command as it is ordained, says Nanak.

२

- १-हुकमी होवनि आकार ।  
 २-हुकमु न कहिया जाई ।  
 ३-हुकमी होवनि जीअ हुकमि मिलै वडियाई ।  
 ४-हुकमी उतमु नीचू हुकमी लिखि  
 दुख सुख पाईअहि ।  
 ५-इकनी हुकमी बखसीस इक हुकमी  
 सदा भवाईअहि ।  
 ६-हुकमै अंदरि सभुको बाहरि हुकम न कोइ ।  
 ७-नानक हुकमै जे बुझै त हौमै कहे न कोइ ॥

३

- १-गावै को ताणु होवै किसै ताणु ।  
 २-गावै को दाति जाणै नोसाणु ।  
 ३-गावै को गुण बडिआईआ चार ।  
 ४-गावै को विदिया विखमु वीचारु ।  
 ५-गावै को साजि करे तनु खेह ।

*II—His Command.*

1. By His command are all manifestations produced.
2. His command cannot be described.
3. By His command individuals come into being and by His command they attain greatness.
4. By His command they are high and low and by His command they receive pleasures and pains as decreed.
5. By His command some are endowed with His Grace and some are left to wander.
6. All are subject to His command; none are beyond it.
7. When a man understands His command, says Nanak, he talks not of self.

*III—The One Who Commands: His Various Attributes.*

1. Some sing of His power being gifted with the power of singing so.
2. Some sing of His Grace knowing the signs thereof.
3. Some sing of His goodness and His great virtue.
4. Some sing of His wisdom so difficult to comprehend.
5. Some sing of His making and unmaking of bodies.

- ६—गावै को जीअ लै फिरि देह ।  
 ७—गावै को जापै दिसै दूरि ।  
 ८—गावै को वैखै हादरा हदूरि ।  
 ९—कथना कथी न आवै तोटि ।  
 १०—कथि कथि कथी कोटी कोटि कोटि ।  
 ११—देँदा दे लैदे थकि पाहि ।  
 १२—जुगा जुगंतरि खाही खाहि ।  
 १३—हुकमी हुकमु चलाए राहु ।  
 १४—नानक विगसै बेपरवाहु ॥

## ४

- १—साचा साहिब साचु नाइ भाखिआ भाउ अपारु ।  
 २—आखहि मंगहि देहि देहि दाति करे दातारु ।  
 ३—फेरि कि अगे रखीए जितु दिसै दरबारु ।  
 ४—मुहौ कि बोलणु बोलीए जितु सुणि धरे पियारु ।  
 ५—अमृत वेला सचु नाउ वडियाई वीचारु ।  
 ६—करमी आवै कपड़ा नदरी मोखु दुआरु ।

6. Some sing of His taking life and giving it again.
7. Some sing of His being afar ;
8. Some sing of His being near.
9. His description cannot be exhausted,
10. Though millions describe Him in millions of ways.
11. He is the giver who always gives though the receivers are tired of receiving.
12. His gifts are enjoyed from age to age.
13. By His commands He ordereth the world's affairs ;
14. And remaineth happily unconcerned, says Nanak.

*IV—Worship in Love.*

1. True is the Lord, and true is His Name. He is described in boundless Love.
2. They pray to Him saying "Give, Give," and the Giver grants the gifts.
3. What present to make to Him to gain entry to His Durbar?
4. What words to speak to Him to invoke His Love?
5. At the life-imparting morning hour meditate on the greatness of His true name.
6. By actions man receives the garment and by His Grace salvation.



७—नानक एवै जाणिये सभु आपै सचिआरु ॥

( ५ )

१—थापिआ न जाइ कीता न होइ ।

२—आपे आप निरञ्जन सोइ ।

३—जिनि सेव्या तिनि पाया मानु ।

४—नानक गाविये गुणीनिधानु ।

५—गावियै सुणिये मन रखिये भाउ ।

६—दुख परिहरि सुख घर लै जाइ ।

७—गुरुमुखि नादं गुरुमुखि वेदं गुरुमुखि रहिआ समाई ।

८—गुरु ईसरु गुरु गोरखू बरमा गुरु पारबती माई ।

९—जे हौ जाणा आखा नाहीं कहणा कथनु न जाई ।

१०—गुरा इक देहि बुझाई ।

११—सभना जीआ का इकु दाता सो मैं विसरि न जाई ॥

( ६ )

१—तीर्थि नावा जे तिस भावा

विणु भाणे कि नाइ करी ।

7. Thus, says Nanak, do we know that He alone is true.

*V—Worship in Love.*

1. He is neither installed nor created.
2. He is self-existent and unconditioned.
3. Those who worship Him are honourable.
4. Sing of Him : virtue's treasure, says Nanak.
5. Let us sing of Him, hear Him and be in love with Him,
6. And freed from pain go home in joy.
7. Gurmukh is the *Nada*, Gurmukh the Vedas, Gurmukh pervades everywhere.
8. The Guru is Shiva, the Guru is Vishnoo, the Guru is Brahma, as also Parvati.
9. Even if I knew Him, I should not describe Him as to describe Him is impossible.
10. The Guru has taught me one thing :
11. He is the All-giver, He should never be forgotten.

*VI—Worship in Love.*

1. I may bathe at the place of pilgrimage if I possess love for God. Without such love what need to bathe?

- २—जेती सिरठी उपाई वेखा  
विणु कर्मा कि मिलै लई ।
- ३—मति विचि रतन जवाहर माणिक  
जे इक गुरु की सिख सुणी ।
- ४—गुरा इक देहि बुझाई ।
- ५—सभना जीआ का इकु दाता  
सो मैं विसरि न जाई ॥

( ७ )

- १—जे जुग चारे आरजा होर दसूणी होइ ।
- २—नवा खंडा विचि जाणिये नालि चलै सभ कोइ ।
- ३—चंगा नाउ रखाय के जस कीरति जगि लेय ।
- ४—जे तिसु नदरि न आवई त बात न पूछै कोय ।
- ५—कीटा अंदरि कीटुकरी दोसी दोसु धरे ।
- ६—नानक निर्गुण गुणु करे गुणवंतिया गुणु दे ।
- ७—तेहा कोई न सूझई जि तिसु गुणु कोई करे ॥

2. Throughout all visible creation without action nothing is achieved.
3. Within himself man has gems, jewels and rubies, if he will but listen to the teachings of the Guru.
4. The Guru has taught me one thing :
5. He is the All-giver, He should never be forgotten.

*VII—Worship in Love.*

1. One may attain the age of the four *Yugas* or even ten times that age ;
2. He may acquire fame throughout the nine continents and become a world-leader ;
3. And winning a high name he may gain the esteem and admiration of the world ;
4. Yet if he wins not a place in the sight of God he is to be counted as nothing—
5. Only a worm of worms and a sinner of sinners.
6. God alone, says Nanak, maketh the bad good and the good better.
7. But there is none to be found who can do any good to God.

( ८ )

- १—सुणिये सिध पीर सुरिनाथ ।
- २—सुणिये धरति धवल आकाश ।
- ३—सुणिये दीप लोय पाताल ।
- ४—सुणिये पोहि न सकै कालु ।
- ५—नानक भगता सदा विगासु ।
- ६—सुणिये दुख पाप का नासु ॥

( ९ )

- १—सुणिये ईसरु बरमा इंदु ।
- २—सुणिये मुखि सलाहण मंदु ।
- ३—सुणिये जोग जुगति तनि भेद ।
- ४—सुणिये सास्तर सिमृति वेद ।
- ५—नानक भगता सदा विगासु ।
- ६—सुणिये दुख पाप का नासु ॥

## CHAPTER TWO

## The Quest.

*VIII—Listening.*

1. By listening one knows the adepts, the saints and the masters.
2. By listening one knows the earth and the nether and higher regions.
3. By listening one knows the secrets of the earth and of the nether and higher regions.
4. By listening one remains unhurt by death.
5. The devotees of God, says Nanak, are always happy.
6. By listening their pains and sins are ended.

*IX—Listening.*

1. By listening one knows Shiva, Brahma and Indra.
2. By listening even the vicious sing His praise.
3. By listening one becomes acquainted with the practices of *Yoga*, and with the mysteries of the body.
4. By listening one is possessed with the knowledge of the *Shastras*, *Smritis* and *Vedas*.
5. The devotees of God, says Nanak, are always happy.
6. By listening their pains and sins are ended.

( १० )

- १—सुणिये सतु सन्तोषु ज्ञानु ।
- २—सुणिये अठसठि का इसनानु ।
- ३—सुणिये पढ़ि पढ़ि पावहि मानु ।
- ४—सुणिये लागै सहज धियानु ।
- ५—नानक भगता सदा विगासु ।
- ६—सुणिये दूख पाप का नासु ॥

( ११ )

- १—सुणिये सरा गुण के गाह ।
- २—सुणिये सेख पीर पातिसाह ।
- ३—सुणिये अंधे पावहि राहु ।
- ४—सुणिये हाथ होवै असगाहु ।
- ५—नानक भगता सदा विगासु ।
- ६—सुणिये दूख पाप का नासु ॥

( १२ )

- १—मनै की गति कही न जाय ।

*X—Listening.*

1. By listening one finds truth, contentment and wisdom.
2. By listening one gains the merit of 68 pilgrimages.
3. By listening one gains the honour of reciting His name.
4. By listening one finds it easy to fix one's mind in meditation.
5. The devotees of God, says Nanak, are always happy.
6. By listening their pains and sins are ended.

*XI—Listening.*

1. By listening one is endowed with the noblest virtues.
2. By listening one becomes a sage, a spiritual preceptor and a king.
3. By listening the blind find the way.
4. By listening the sea becomes fordable.
5. The devotees of God, says Nanak, are always happy.
6. By listening their pains and sins are ended.

*XII—Faith.*

1. The state of one who has faith cannot be described.



२—जे को कहै पिछे पछुताय ।

३—कागदि कलम न लिखणहारु ।

४—मंनै का बहि करनि वीचारु ।

५—ऐसा नाम निरंजनु होइ ।

६—जे को मंनि जाणो मंनि कोइ ॥

( १३ )

१—मंनै सुरति होवै मनि बुधि ।

२—मंनै सगल भवण की सुधि ।

३—मंनै मुहि चोटा न खाइ ।

४—मंनै जम कै साथ न जाइ ।

५—ऐसा नामु निरंजन होइ ।

६—जे को मंनि जाणो मनि कोइ ॥

( १४ )

१—मंनै मारगि ठाक न पाइ ।

२—मंनै पति सिउ परगट जाइ ।

2. He who attempts to describe it repents.
3. There is neither paper nor pen, nor are there any writers
4. To sit and to reflect upon faith.
5. Such is that Holy Name.
6. The faith that can comprehend Him is faith indeed.

### *XIII—Faith.*

1. By faith comes inner knowledge and wisdom.
2. By faith comes knowledge of all the worlds.
3. By faith one is not hurt in the face.
4. By faith one goes not to death.
5. Such is that Holy Name.
6. The faith that can comprehend Him is faith indeed.

### *XIV—Faith.*

1. By faith are removed obstacles from the path.
2. By faith one goes renowned and honoured.

३—मंनै मगु न चलै पंथु ।

४—मंनै धर्म सेती संबंधु ।

५—ऐसा नाम निरंजनु होइ ।

६—जे को मंनि जाणै मनि कोइ ॥

( १५ )

१—मंनै पावहि मोख दुआरु ।

२—मंनै परवारे साधारु ।

३—मंनै तरे तारे गुरु सिख ।

४—मंनै नानक भवहि न भिख ।

५—ऐसा नाम निरंजन होइ ।

६—जे को मंनि जाने मनि कोइ ॥

( १६ )

१—पंच परवाण पंच परधान ।

२—पंचे पावहि दरगहि मानु ।

३—पंचे सोहहि दरि राजानु ।

४—पंचा का गुरु ऐक धियानु ।

3. By faith one proceeds not by bye-paths but by the highway.
4. By faith one is allied to *Dharma*.
5. Such is that Holy Name.
6. The faith that can comprehend Him is faith indeed.

*XV—Faith.*

1. By faith one finds the way to salvation.
2. By faith one saves his family.
3. By faith the Guru himself crosses the world and also helps his disciples in crossing it.
4. By faith, says Nanak, one wanders not abegging.
5. Such is that Holy Name.
6. The faith that can comprehend Him is faith indeed.

*XVI—Sainthood.*

1. The saints are the elect; great are the saints.
2. Honoured are the saints in the court of God.
3. Ornaments are they in the courts of kings.
4. The only Guru of the saints is divine meditation;

- ५—जे को कहै करै वीचारु ।  
 ६—करते कै करणै नाही सुमारु ।  
 ७—धौलु धरमु दया का पूतु ।  
 ८—संतोखु थापि रखिया जिनि सूति ।  
 ९—जे को बुझै होवै सचिआरु ।  
 १०—धवलै ऊपरि केता भारु ।  
 ११—धरती होरु परै होरु होरु ।  
 १२—तिसते भारु तलै कवणु जोरु ।  
 १३—जीअ जाति रंगा के नाव ।  
 १४—सभना लिखिया बुड़ी कलाम ।  
 १५—ऐहु लेखा लिखि जाणो कोइ ।  
 १६—लेखा लिखिआ केता होइ ।  
 १७—केता ताणु सुआलिहु रूपु ।  
 १८—केती दाति जाणौ कौणु कूतु ।  
 १९—कीता पसाउ ऐको कवाउ ।  
 २०—तिस ते होइ लख दखिआ ।

5. All that they say is wisdom.
6. There is no end of God's works.
7. There is Dharma's Bull born of compassion,
8. And tied to the rope of contentment.
9. He who knows this is wise.
10. How great is the load on the Bull,
11. There being countless worlds upon worlds ?
12. Who bears the Bull itself ?
13. The names of various kinds and colours of beings,
14. All have been recorded by one great pen.
15. Who can write the account of all this ?
16. How long that account if written it could be ?
17. What great power, what beauty of form !
18. What great gifts ! what accountant can count them all ?
19. One word manifested all,
20. Giving rise to countless streams.

- २१—कुदरति कवण कहा वीचारु ।  
 २२—वारिआ न जावा ऐक वार ।  
 २३—जो तुधु भावै साई भली कार ।  
 २४—तू सदा सलामति निरंकार ॥

( १७ )

- १—असंख जप असंख भाउ ।  
 २—असंख पूजा असंख तप ताउ ।  
 ३—असंख गरंथि मुख वेद पाठि ।  
 ४—असंख जोग मनि रहहि उदास ।  
 ५—असंख भगत गुण गिआन विचार ।  
 ६—असंख सतो असंख दातार ।  
 ७—असंख सूर मुह भख सार ।  
 ८—असंख मोनि लिव लाइ तार ।  
 ९—कुदरति कवण कहा वीचार ।

21. What power have I to describe Thee ?
22. Even the sacrifice of myself would make but a poor offering to Thee.
23. Only that which pleaseth Thee is good.
24. Thou the formless One endurest for ever.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Cosmic Law.

#### *XVII—The Good.*

1. Countless recitations there are and countless devotions.
2. Countless adorations there are and penances innumerable.
3. Countless are those who read the Vedas and holy books.
4. Countless are those who engage in Yoga practices with unattached minds.
5. Countless devotees there are who reflect on the divine attributes and wisdom.
6. Countless are the generous who give alms.
7. Countless are the brave ones facing the steel.
8. Countless are the persons absorbed in deep meditations.
9. What power have I to describe Thee ?



१०—वाँआ न जावा एक वार ।

११—जो तुधु भावै साई भली कार ।

१२—तू सदा सलामति निरंकार ॥

( १८ )

१—असंख मूर्ख अंध घोर ।

२—असंख चोर हराम खोर ।

३—असंख अमर करि जाहि जोर ।

४—असंख गल वढ हतिया कमाहि ।

५—असंख पापी पापु करि जाहि ।

६—असंख कूड़ियार कूड़े फिराहि ।

७—असंख मलेछ मलु भखि खाहि ।

८—असंख निंदक सिरि करहि भारु ।

९—नानक नीचु कहै वीचारु ।

१०—वारिया न जावा एक वार ।

११—जो तुध भावै साई भली कार ।

१२—तू सदा सलामति निरंकार ॥

10. Even the sacrifice of myself would make  
but a poor offering to Thee.
11. Only that which pleaseth Thee is good.
12. Thou the formless One endurest for ever.

*XVIII—The Bad.*

1. Countless are the ignorant and the stone  
blind.
2. Countless are thieves and felons.
3. Countless are the rulers who oppress.
4. Countless are the cut-throats living in villainy.
5. Countless are the sinners steeped in sin.
6. Countless are the liars who delight in  
falsehood.
7. Countless are the unclean eating filth.
8. Countless are the calumniators who load  
their heads with sin.
9. Thus humble Nanak thinks :
10. Even the sacrifice of myself would make  
but a poor offering to Thee.
11. Only that which pleaseth Thee is good.
12. Thou the formless One endurest for ever.

( १६ )

- १—असंख नाव असंख थाव ।
- २—अगंम अगंम असंख लोअ ।
- ३—असंख कहहि सिरि भारु होइ ।
- ४—अखरी नामु अखरी सालाह ।
- ५—अखरी गिआनु गीत गुण गाह ।
- ६—अखरी लिखणु बोलणु बाणि ।
- ७—अखरी सिरि संजोगु वखाणि ।
- ८—जिनि एहि लिखे तिसु सिरि नाहि ।
- ९—जिव फुरमाए तिव तिव पाहि ।
- १०—जेता कीता तेता नाउ ।
- ११—विणु नावै नाही को थाउ ।
- १२—कुदरति कवण कहा वीचारु ।
- १३—वागिआ न जावा एक वार ।
- १४—जो तुधु भावै साई भली कार ।
- १५—त सदा सलामति निरंकार ।

*XIX—The Almighty.*

1. Countless are His names and countless His abodes.
2. Countless are His worlds beyond reach.
3. Countless are those who praise Him with bowed heads.
4. By the letters is His name uttered and by the letters is He praised.
5. By the letters is the divine knowledge gained and His praise sung; and by the letters are His attributes expressed.
6. By the letters is He written and spoken about.
7. By the letters inscribed on the forehead of man is known his destiny.
8. He, however, who writes bears no letters on his forehead.
9. Man gets what He ordains.
10. All is a manifestation of His Name.
11. Without His Name there is no place.
12. What power have I to describe Thee ?
13. Even the sacrifice of myself would make but a poor offering to Thee.
14. Only that which pleaseth Thee is good.
15. Thou the formless One endurest for ever.

( २० )

- १—भरीए हथु पैर तनु देह ।  
 २—पाणी धोतै उतरसु खेह ।  
 ३—मूत पलीती कपडु होइ ।  
 ४—दे साबुनु लइए उहु धोइ ।  
 ५—भरिए मति पापा कै संगि ।  
 ६—उहु धोयै नावै कै रंगि ।  
 ७—पुत्री पापी आखणु नाही ।  
 ८—करि करि करणा लिखि लै जाहु ।  
 ९—आपे बीजि आपेही खाहु ।  
 १०—नानक हुकमी आवहु जाहु ॥

( २१ )

- १—तीर्थु तपु दया दतु दानु ।  
 २—जे को पावै तिल का मान ।

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Human Responsibility.

#### *XX—Purification.*

1. When the hands, feet and body are soiled with dirt,
2. They are cleansed with water.
3. When a garment is polluted by filth,
4. It is washed with soap.
5. When the mind is soiled by sin,
6. It is cleansed with God's name.
7. The qualities of "Virtuous" and "Vicious" are not acquired by mere assertion.
8. Man carries the record of his actions with him.
9. As one sows so one reaps.
10. By God's command, says Nanak, men come and go.

#### *XXI—Inner Pilgrimage.*

1. Pilgrimages, penances, compassion and almsgiving
2. Bring in the merit of but an oilseed.

- ३—सुनिआ मंनिआपत्तिकीता भाउ ।  
 ४—अन्तरगति तीरथि मलि नाउ ।  
 ५—सभि गुण तेरे मै नाही कोइ ।  
 ६—विणु गुण कीते भगति न होइ ।  
 ७—सुअसति आथि बाणी वरमाउ ।  
 ८—सति सुहाणु सदा मान चाउ ।  
 ९—कवणु सु वेला वखतु कवणु  
     कवणु थिति कवणु वारु ।  
 १०—कवणि सि रुती माहु  
     कवणु जितु होआ आकारु ।  
 ११—वेल न पाईआ पंडती  
     जि होवै लेखु पुराणु ।  
 १२—बखतु न पाइउ कादिया  
     जि लिखनि लेखु कुराणु ।  
 १३—थिति वारु न जोगी जाणै  
     रुति माहु न कोई ।

3. Hear God, have faith in Him and entertain Love for Him.
4. This is the inner pilgrimage at which you should bathe washing off the mental dirt.
5. All virtue is in Thee O God, I am worth nothing at all.
6. Devotion to Thee is not possible without practising virtue.
7. Praise be to Him Who is the *Bani* and the *Brahma*,
8. And Who is the true, the beautiful and the heart's perpetual longing.
9. When was the time, the moment, the date, the day,
10. What season, what month, when the Universe was created ?
11. That time is not known to the Pandits else it would have been recorded in the Puranas.
12. That moment is not known to the Qazis else it would have been mentioned in a commentary of the Alkoran.
13. That day, that season or month is not known to the Yogis or to anyone else.



१४—जा करता सिरठी कउ साजे  
आपे जाणै सोई ।

१५—किव करि आखा किव साला ही  
किउ वरणी किव जाणा ।

१६—नानक आखणि सभु को आखै  
इकदू इकु सिआणा ।

१७—वडा साहिबु वडी नाई  
कीता जाका होवै ।

१८—नानक जे को आपौ जाणै  
अगै गया न सोहै ॥

( २२ )

१—पाताला पाताल लख आगासा आगास ।

२—ओड़क ओड़क भालि थके  
वेद कहनि इक वात ।

14. The time when He created the Universe is known to Him alone.
15. How shall I invoke Him, how praise, how describe, how know Him ?
16. All talk about Him, says Nanak, claiming to be each wiser than the other.
17. Great is the Lord and Great is His Name. What He willeth that taketh place.
18. He who suffers his own will to prevail, says Nanak, will not look beautiful in the life to come.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Inscrutable Providence.

#### *XXII—Limitless Creation.*

1. There are lacs of nether and higher regions.
2. “ We are baffled in our search for the limits thereof,” say the Vedas.

३—सहस अठारह कहनि कतेबा

असुलू इकु धातु ।

४—लेखा होइ त लिखीए लेखै होय विणासु ।

५—नानक वडा आखीये

आपे जाणै आपु ॥

( २३ )

१—साला ही सालाहि एति

सुरति न पाईआ ।

२—नदीआ अतै वाह पवहि

समुंदि न जाणीअहि ।

३—समुंद साह सुलतान गिरहा

सेती मालु धनु ।

४—कीड़ी तुलि न होवनी जे तिसु

मनहु न वीसरहि ॥

( २४ )

१—अन्तु न सिफती कहणि न अन्तु ।

3. The books make mention of eighteen thousand worlds. Yet the truth is the same.
4. One would describe creation if one could. To attempt to describe it is to perish.
5. He is great, says Nanak ; how great, He alone knows.

*XXIII—Profound Wisdom.*

1. His devotees who praise Him comprehend Him not.
2. Even as the streams and rivulets that flow into the sea fathom it not.
3. Kings who possess dominions wide as the ocean and great hoards of riches,
4. Are not worth an ant that forgets not God from its heart.

*XXIV—Infinite Magnificence.*

1. Infinite are His Attributes and infinite their description.

- २—अन्त न करणै देणि न अन्तु ।  
 ३—अन्तु न वेखणि सुणणि न अन्तु ।  
 ४—अन्तु न जापै किआ मनि मंतु ।  
 ५—अन्तु न जापै कीता आकारु ।  
 ६—अन्तु न जापै पारावारु ।  
 ७—अन्त कारणि केते विललाहि ।  
 ८—ताके अन्त न पाए जाहि ।  
 ९—इहु अन्तु न जाणे कोइ ।  
 १०—बहुता कहीऐ बहुता होइ ।  
 ११—वड़ा साहिबु ऊचा थाउ ।  
 १२—ऊचे उपरि ऊचा नाउ ।  
 १३—एवढु ऊचा होवै कोइ ।  
 १४—तिसु ऊचे कउ जाणै सोइ ।  
 १५—जे वडु आपि जाणै आपि आपि ।  
 १६—नानक नदरी करमी दाति ॥

2. Infinite are His works and infinite His gifts.
3. Infinite is His seeing and hearing.
4. Infinite is the conception of His mind.
5. Infinite are His manifestations,
6. And infinite their bounds.
7. Many distress themselves to find His magnitude,
8. But find it not.
9. His limits are not known to any.
10. The more one describes Him the more there is to describe.
11. Great is He and high is His throne.
12. His name is the highest of the high.
13. Only one who is as high as He
14. Can know that height.
15. How high He is He alone knows.
16. Man has His gift only by His grace and mercy, says Nanak.

( २५ )

- १—बहुता करमु लिखिआ न जाइ ।
- २—बडा दाता तिलु न तमाइ ।
- ३—केते मंगहि जोध अपार ।
- ४—केतिआ गणत नहीं वीचारु ।
- ५—केते खपि तुटहि वेकार ।
- ६—केते लै लै मुकरू पाहि ।
- ७—केते मूरख खाही खाहि ।
- ८—केतिआ दूख भूख सद मार ।
- ९—इहि भि दाति तेरी दातार ।
- १०—बंदि खलासी भागौ होइ ।
- ११—होर आखि न सकै कोइ ।
- १२—जे को खायकु आखणि पाइ ।
- १३—उह जाणौ जे तीआ मुहि खाइ ।
- १४—आपे जाणौ आपे देइ ।
- १५—आख हि सि भि केई केइ ।

*XXV—Gifts and Bounties.*

1. God's mercy is beyond description.
2. He is the great Giver coveting not an oil-seed.
3. Many unrivalled warriors beg of Him ;
4. Also many others whose number is uncountable.
5. Many waste themselves in idle pleasures.
6. Many receive His gifts but confess them not.
7. Many fools there are who have His gifts in plenty.
8. Many suffer pain and privations perpetually.
9. Even these are Thy gifts, O Giver;
10. Liberation and bondage depend on Thy will ;
11. There is none to intervene.
12. Should a fool venture to intervene,
13. He would know many hard slaps in the face.
14. He knows our needs perfectly and grants them Himself.
15. Yet there are few who admit this fact.



१६—जिसनो बखसे । सफति सालाह ।

१७—नानक पातिसाही पातिसाहु ॥

( २६ )

१—अमुलु गुण अमुलु वापार ।

२—अमुलु वापारीए अमुलु भंडार ।

३—अमुलु आवि. अमुलु लै जाहि ।

४—अमुलु भाइ अमुला समाहि ।

५—अमुलु धरमु अमुलु दीवाणु ।

६—अमुलु तुलु अमुलु परवाणु ।

७—अमुलु बखशीश अमुलु नीसाणु ।

८—अमुलु करमु अमुलु फुरमाणु ।

९—अमुलो अमुलु आखि न जाइ ।

१०—आखि आखि रहे लिव लाइ ।

११—आखहि वेद पाठ पुराण ।

१२—आखहि पढ़े करहि वखिआण ।

१३—आखहि वरमे आखहि इंद ।

16. One whom He endows with the gift of singing His praise
17. Is a king among kings, says Nanak.

*XXVI—Compassion and Justice.*

1. Invaluable are His glories and invaluable the business thereof.
2. Invaluable are those who deal in that business and invaluable the stores thereof.
3. Invaluable are the customers who come and go.
4. Invaluable is His love and invaluable are those absorbed therein.
5. Invaluable is His law and invaluable His court.
6. Invaluable are His scales and invaluable His weights.
7. Invaluable are His gifts and invaluable His marks of distinction.
8. Invaluable is His compassion and invaluable His command.
9. He is the most valuable of all valuables, whom it is not possible to describe.
10. Describing Him, they enter into deep meditation.
11. Those who read the Vedas and the Puranas describe Him.
12. Those who make profound studies and deliver sermons describe Him.
13. Brahmas and Indras describe Him.

- १४—आखहि गोपी तै गोविंद ।  
 १५—आखहि ईसर आखहि सिद्ध ।  
 १६—आखहि केते कीते बुद्ध ।  
 १७—आखहि दानव आखहि देव ।  
 १८—आखहि सुरनर मुनिजन सेव ।  
 १९—केते आखहि आखहि पाहि ।  
 २०—केते कहि कहि उठि उठि जाहि ।  
 २१—ऐते कीते होरि करेहि ।  
 २२—ता आखि न सकहि केई केइ ।  
 २३—जे वडु भावै ते वडु होइ ।  
 २४—नानक जाणै साचा सोइ ।  
 २५—जे को आखै बोलु बिगाडु ।  
 २६—ता लिखिए सिरि गावारा गावार ॥

( २७ )

- १—सो दुरु केहा सो धरु केहा  
 सरब समाले ।

14. Gopees and Govinda describe Him.
15. Shiva and adepts describe Him.
16. Many Buddhas enlightened by Him describe Him.
17. Many *Danvas* and *Devas* describe Him.
18. Many great persons, sages and devotees describe Him.
19. Many are describing Him and many are about to begin describing Him.
20. Many depart ere they have done describing Him.
21. Even if as many more were born,
22. They could not exhaust His description.
23. He can be as great as He wills to be.
24. That True One alone knows how great He is, says Nanak.
25. Should an impious one claim to know Him fully,
26. He would be called the fool of fools.

### XXVII—Sovereignty.

1. How beautiful is the door and how beautiful the house where sitting He watches all !

२-बाजे नाद अनेक असं वां केते वावणारे ।

३-केते राग परी सिउ कहीअनि केते गावनहारे ।

४-गावहि तुहनो पउणु पाणी बैसन्तरु

गावै राजा धरमु दुआरे ।

५-गावहि निद्रुगुपत लिखि जाणहि

लिखि लिखि धरमु वीचारे ।

६-गावहि ईसरू बरमा देवी सोहनि सदा सवारे ।

७-गावहि इन्द्र इन्द्रासणि बैठै देवतिआ दरि नाले ।

८-गावहि सिध समाधी अंदरि गावनि साध विचारे ।

९-गावनि जती सती सन्तोखी गावहि वीर करारे ।

१०-गावनि पंडित पढ़नि रखीसर जुगु जुगु वेदा नाले ।

११-गावहि मोहणीआ मनुमोहनि सुरगा मच्छपड्याले ।

१२-गावनि रतन उपाए तेरे अठसठि तीर्थ नाले ।

१३-गावहि जोध महाबल सूरु गावहि खाणी चारे ।

2. There many musicians play numerous kinds of instruments.
3. And many songs are sung in different measures by singers innumerable.
4. To Thee sing wind, water, and fire ; to Thee sings the *Dharamraja* at Thy door.
5. To Thee sing the *Chitguptas* recording human actions which the *Dharamraja* judges.
6. To Thee sing Shiva, Brahma and Devi ever endowed with beauty by Thee.
7. To Thee sings Indra seated on his throne with his *Devtas* at Thy door.
8. To Thee sing the adepts absorbed in meditation and to Thee sing the sages sitting in contemplation.
9. To Thee sing the celibates, the true and the contented and to Thee sing the mighty heroes.
10. To Thee sing the pandits and Rishis reading the Vedas from age to age.
11. To Thee sing the beauties that enchant the heart, in heaven, on earth and beneath.
12. To Thee sing the gems created by Thee, as also the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage.
13. To Thee sing the brave and mighty warriors and the fourfold creation.

१३—गगवहि खंड मंडल वरमंडा करि करि रखै धारे ।

१५—सेई तुधुनो गावहि जो तुधु भावनि  
रते तेरे भगत रसाले ।

१६—होरि केते गावन से मै चिति न आवनि  
नानकु किआ वीचारे ।

१७—सोई सोई सदा सचु साहिबु  
साचा साची नाई ।

१८—है भी होसी जाइ न जासी  
रचना जिनि रचाई ।

१९—रंगी रंगी भाती करि करि  
जिनसी माया जिनि उपाई ।

२०—करि करि वेखै कीता आपणा  
जिव तिस दी बडियाई ।

२१—जो तिसु भावै सोई करसी  
हुकुमु न करणा जाई ।

२२—सो पातिसाहु साहा पातिसा  
नानक रहण रजाई ॥

14. To Thee sing the continents, the worlds and the universes made and maintained by Thee alone.
15. To Thee sing all whom Thou favourest and those steeped in Thy blissful love.
16. Many more sing to Thee whom I cannot think of; what more can Nanak say ?
17. He, the Lord is ever true and true is His name.
18. He is and shall endure for ever though the creation He has created ceases to be.
19. He who creates creatures of various kinds and colours,
20. Contemplates His creation which reveals His greatness.
21. He doeth what pleaseth Him : none can dictate to Him.
22. He is the King of kings. Resign yourself to His will, says Nanak.



( २८ )

१—मुंदा सन्तोखु सरमु पतु भोली-  
धियानकी करहि बिभूति ।

२—खिंथा कालु कुआरी काया  
जुगति डंडा परतीति ।

३—आई पंथी सगल जमाती  
मनि जीतै जगु जीतु ।

४—आदेसु तिसै आदेसु ।

५—आदि अनीलु अनादि अनाहति  
जुग जुग एको वेसु ॥

( २९ )

१—भुगति गिआनु दया भंडारणि  
घटि घटि वाजहि नाद ।

२—आपि नाथु नाथी सभ जाकी  
रिद्धि सिद्धि अवरा साद ।

## CHAPTER SIX

### Formalism and Sectarianism.

#### *XXVIII Signs and Symbols.*

1. Let contentment be your ear-rings and modesty your begging pouch. Besmear your body with the ashes of meditation.
2. Let the memory of death be the shroud-like chequered rug you wear. Observe the rule of keeping the body chaste like a virgin; and let faith in God be your staff.
3. Let universal brotherhood be your *Ayee-panth*. To win the mind is to win the world.
4. Prostration to Him! Prostration to Him!!
5. Who is in the beginning, before the beginning, colourless, imperishable, the same throughout all ages of ages.

#### *XXIX—Signs and Symbols.*

1. Let knowledge of God be your food and compassion its server, let the inner music be your *Nada*.
2. God alone is the Master who has all under His sway. There is no relish in the *riddhis* or the *siddhis*.

- ३—संजोगु विजोगु दुइ कार  
चलावहि लेखे आवहि भाग ।
- ४—आदेसु तिसे आदेसु ।
- ५—आदि अनीलु अनादि अनाहति  
जुग जुग एको वेसु ॥

( ३० )

- १—एका माई जुगति विआई  
तिनि चेले परवाणु ।
- २—इकु संसारी इकु भंडारी इकु लाए दीवाणु ।
- ३—जिव तिसु भावै तिवै चलावै  
जिव होवै फुरमाणु ।
- ४—उहु वेखै ओना नदरि न आवै  
बहुता एहु विडाणु ।
- ५—आदेसु तिसे आदेसु ।
- ६—आदि अनीलु अनादि अनाहति  
जुग जुग एको वेसु ॥

3. Union and disunion both work in the world.  
Man gets what He ordains.
4. Prostration to Him ! Prostration to Him !!
5. Who is in the beginning, before the beginning, colourless, imperishable, the same throughout all ages of ages.

*XXX—Trinity.*

1. The one mother mysteriously conceiving gave birth to three disciples:
2. One the creator, the other the maintainer and the third the annihilator.
3. He makes them to work as He wills.
4. He sees them, but they see Him not. How wonderful is this !
5. Prostration to Him ! Prostration to Him !!
6. Who is in the beginning, before the beginning, colourless, imperishable, the same throughout all ages of ages.

( ३१ )

- १—आसणु लोइ लोइ भंडार ।  
 २—जो किछु पाइआ सु एका वार ।  
 ३—करि करि वेखै सिरजणहार ।  
 ४—नानक सचे की साची कार ।  
 ५—आदेसु तिसे आदेसु ।  
 ६—आदि अनीलु अनादि अनाहति  
 जुग जुग एको वेसु ॥

( ३२ )

- १—इकदू जीभौ लख होहि लख होवहि लखवीस ।  
 २—लखु लखु गेड़ा आखअहि एकु नाम जगदीस ।  
 ३—एतु राहि पति पवड़ीया चढ़िए होइ इकीस ।  
 ४—सुणि गला आकास की कीटा आई रीस ।  
 ५—नानक नदरी पाइए कूड़ी कूड़े ठीस ॥

( ३३ )

- १—आखणि जोरु चुपै नह जोरु ।

*XXXI—The Seat of God.*

1. God has His seat and His treasure in all places.
2. Whatever is found there has been placed by Him once for all.
3. He contemplates the creation He creates.
4. The works of the True One are ever true, says Nanak.
5. Prostration to Him ! Prostration to Him !!
6. Who is in the beginning, before the beginning, colourless, imperishable, the same throughout all ages of ages.

*XXXII—Divine Grace.*

1. Should one possess a lac of tongues for this and twenty times a lac for that,
2. One should with each tongue repeat the name of God lacs of times.
3. On this path to the bridegroom let one mount the stairs and become one with God.
4. Even the meanest creature, hearing of things sublime, is filled with a longing to soar high.
5. By His grace alone, says Nanak, is He found. All else is false ; all else is vanity.

*XXXIII—Divine Grace.*

1. Man has not the power to speak or to keep silence.

- २—जोरु न मंगणि देणि न जोरु ।  
 ३—जोरु न जीवण मरणि नह जोरु ।  
 ४—जोरु न राजि मालि मनि सोरु ।  
 ५—जोरु न सुरती गिआनि वीचारि ।  
 ६—जोरु न जुगती छुटै संसारु ।  
 ७—जिसु हथि जोरु करि वेखै सोइ ।  
 ८—नानक उत्तमु नीचु न कोइ ॥

( ३४ )

- १—राती रुती थिती वार ।  
 २—पवण पाणी अगनी पाताल ।  
 ३—तिस विचि धरती थापि रखी धर्मसाल ।  
 ४—तिसु विच जीअ जुगति के रंग ।  
 ५—तिनके नाम अनेक अनन्त ।

2. Man has not the power to ask or to give.
3. Man has not the power to live or to die.
4. Man has not the power to gain kingdoms or wealth which excite the mind.
5. Man has not the power to attain inner knowledge, wisdom or understanding.
6. Man has not the power to find the way of release from the world.
7. Only He who has all power does all ;
8. None is high or low, says Nanak.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Jnana (Wisdom)*

#### *XXXIV—First Steps in Self-culture.*

1. God made the nights, the days, the lunar days and the seasons.
2. He made the wind, the water, the fire and the nether worlds.
3. And in the midst of all these, He fixed the earth as it were a temple.
4. And on the earth He created many lives of multifarious kinds and colours,
5. And gave them many names and forms of unlimited variety.



- ६—करमी करमी होइ वीचारु ।  
 ७—सचा आपि सचा दरबारु ।  
 ८—तिथै सोहनि पंच परवाणु ।  
 ९—नदरी करमि पवै नीसाणु ।  
 १०—कच पकाई ओथै पाइ ।  
 ११—नानक गइआ जापै जाइ ॥

( ३५ )

- १—धर्म खंड का एहो धर्मु ।  
 २—प्रिआन खंड का आखहु कर्मु ।  
 ३—केते पवण पाणी वैसन्तर केते कान महेस ।  
 ४—केते बरमे घाड़ति घड़ी अहि रूप रंग के वेस ।  
 ५—केतीआ कर्म भूमी मेर केते केते धू उपदेस ।  
 ६—केते इंद चंद सूर केते केते मंडल देस ।  
 ७—केते सिध बुध नाथ केते केते देवी वेस ।  
 ८—केते देव दानव मुनि केते केते रत्न समुंद ।

6. All these lives are judged by their actions.
7. Just is He and just is His court,
8. Where the pious and the good stand glorified,
9. And by His Grace and Mercy receive distinction.
10. Good and bad deeds are rewarded there.
11. On reaching there one knows this, says Nanak.

XXXV—*Cosmic Vision.*

1. Such is the practice in the region of Law (*Dharma*).
2. Now will I give a description of the region of Divine Knowledge (*Jnana*).
3. Many winds, waters and fires are there ; many Krishnas and Shivas.
4. Many Brahmas are there building lives of various forms and colours.
5. Many worlds of action and many *Merus* are there ; many *Dhruvas* and sermons.
6. Many Indras, Moons and Suns are there ; many worlds and climes.
7. Many Siddhas, Buddhas and Naths are there ; many Devis and their counterparts.
8. Many *Devas*, *Danavas* and *Munis* are there ; many gems and seas.

६—केतीआ खाणी केतीआ बाणी केते पात नरिंद ।

१०—केतीआ सुरती सेवक केते नानक अंतु न अंतु ॥

( ३६ )

१—गिआन खंड महि गिआनु परचंडु ।

२—तिथै नाद विनोद कोड अनंदु ।

३—सरम खंड की बाणी रूपु ।

४—तिथै घाड़ति घड़ीए बहुतु अनूप ।

५—ताकीआ गला कथीआ न जाहि ।

६—जे को कहै पिछै पछुताइ ।

७—तिथै घड़ीए सुरति मति मनि बुधि ।

८—तिथै घड़ीए सुरा सिधा की सुधि ॥

( ३७ )

१—कर्म खंड की बाणी जोरु ।

२—तिथै होरु न कोई होरु ।

३—तिथै जोध महाबल सूर ।

४—तिन महि राम रहिआ भरपूर ।

9. Many sources of creation and many languages are there; many kings and rulers.
10. Many inspired beings are there and many worshippers of His. There is no end of them, says Nanak.

*XXXVI—Bliss and Wisdom.*

1. In the region of divine knowledge wisdom predominates,
2. And crores of joys born of musical sounds are there.
3. The characteristic of this realm of happiness is beauty.
4. There exquisite forms are made,
5. Which defy description;
6. And if any one attempts to describe them he repents.
7. Inner knowledge, understanding and wisdom are moulded there,
8. And the higher consciousness of the Devas and the Siddhas is cultivated.

*XXXVII—Service.*

1. The characteristic of the sphere of action is power.
2. Naught else is there.
- 3, 4. Mighty heroes steeped in Rama dwell there.

- ५—तिथै सीतो सीता मदिमा माहि ।  
 ६—ताके रूप न कथने जाहि ।  
 ७—न उहि मरहि न ठागे जाहि ।  
 ८—जिन कै राम बसै मन माहि ।  
 ९—तिथै भगत वसहि के लोअ ।  
 १०—करहि अनंदु सचा मनि सोइ ।  
 ११—सच खंडि वसै निरंकारु ।  
 १२—करि करि वेखै नदरि निहाल ।  
 १३—तिथै खंडि मंडल वरमंड ।  
 १४—जे को कथै त अंत न अंत ।  
 १५—तिथै लोअ लोअ आकार ।  
 १६—जिव जिव हुकमु तिवै तिव कार ।  
 १७—वेखै विगसै करि वीचारु ।  
 १८—नानक कथना करड़ा सारु ॥

( ३८ )

१—जतु पहारा धीरजु सुनिआरु ।

5. Many Sitas full of glory dwell there,
6. Whose beauty cannot be described.
7. They will neither be cheated nor will they die
8. In whose hearts Rama dwells.
9. Worlds of His devotees are there,
10. Who keep the True One in mind and rejoice.
11. In this realm of truth lives the Formless One,
12. Contemplating His creation with happy eye.
13. Continents, worlds and universes are there,
14. The description of which has no end.
15. Worlds upon worlds of creation are there,
16. Where all act as He commands.
17. He sees His creation, contemplates it and rejoices over it.
18. To describe Him, says Nanak, would be simply impossible.

*XXXVIII—Self Discipline. (A Formula).*

1. Continence is the furnace and patience the goldsmith.

- २—अहरणि मति वेदु हथिआरु ।  
 ३—भउ खला अगनि तप ताउ ।  
 ४—भांडा भाउ अमृतु तितु ढालि ।  
 ५—घड़ीए सबदु सचो टकसाल ।  
 ६—जिन कउ नदरि कर्मु तिन कार ।  
 ७—नानक नदरी नदरि निहाल ॥

## सलोकु

- १—पवणु गुरू पाणी पिता माता धरति महत्तु ।  
 २—दिवसु राति दुइ दाई दाया खेलै सगल जगत्तु ।  
 ३—चंगिआईआ बुरिआईआ वाचै धर्मु हदूरि ।  
 ४—करमी आपो आपणी के नेड़े के दूरि ।  
 ५—जिनी नामु धिआइआ गए मुसकति घालि ।  
 ६—नानक ते मुख उजले केती छूटी नालि ॥



2. Pure reason is the anvil and the Vedas are the tools.
3. Fear of God is the bellows and penance the fire.
4. Love of God is the crucible and nectar the substance to be moulded.
5. Thus is the holy word coined at the mint of truth.
6. Only those work thus who enjoy His gracious mercy.
7. His gracious glance alone, says Nanak, makes one happy.

### Epilogue

#### *Shloka—Redemption.*

1. Air is the Guru, water the father and the great earth the mother.
2. Day and night are the two nurses male and female in whose lap the whole world plays.
3. Good and bad actions of men are read out before the *Dharamraja*.
4. All depends upon actions according to which some are near and some far.
5. Those who meditate on His name finish their task.
6. Their looks are bright and they save many others along with them, says Nanak.



## GLOSSARY.

*(Explaining certain words in the Text. See Introduction, page 12).*

Amar	.	.	.	To rule over	XVIII, 3
Asgah	.	.	.	Sea	XI, 4
Baisantar	.	.	.	Fire	XXXII, 3
Bavan haray	.	.	.	Musicians	XXVI, 2
Billah	.	.	.	To distress	XXIV, 7
Hadrahadur	.	.	.	Near	III, 8
How	.	.	.	I or self	II, 7; V, 9
Jinsi maya	.	.	.	Creation	XXVII, 19
Khaik	.	.	.	Fool	XXV, 12
Khinta	.	.	.	Rug	XXVIII, 2
Kut	.	.	.	Accountant	XVI, 18
Laidiban	.	.	.	Annihilator	XXX, 2
Lo	.	.	.	Higher Region	VIII, 3
				World or place	XIX, 2; XXXI, 1
Mansore	.	.	.	Excite the Mind,	XXX, 4
Parchand	.	.	.	To predominate	XXXVI, 1
Parhar	.	.	.	To leave	V, 6

ᵑher	. . .	Presents	. . .	IV, 3
ᵑoh	. . .	To kill or hurt		VIII, 4
ᵑyale	. . .	Lower region	. . .	XXVII, 11
Salahan	. . .	To praise		IX, 2
				XIX, 4
Sár	. . .	Steel		XVII, 7
Sara	. . .	Noble	. . .	XI, 1
Vidan	. . .	Wonderful	. . .	XXX, 5
Vigas	. . .	Happy	. . .	VIII, 5
Vigse	. . .	To be happy	. . .	III, 14
				XXXVII, 17
Vikham	. . .	Difficult	. . .	III, 4



COMMENTARY  
OF  
THE JAPJI SAHIB



## COMMENTARY.

## Prologue.

The prologue consists of three parts :

1. *The Invocation*.—This has been described as the *Mulaṁmantram* or the fundamental Invocation. It is used to invoke the Deity at the beginning of every main portion in the *Adi Granth Sahib*, and in its brief form, "*Eḱ Omḱar Sat Gur Prasadi*," it comes at the beginning of every distinct passage in the Holy Book. Its brief form is used amongst the Sikhs at the beginning of any religious or other book or writing, as also at the start of any important function to mark its sacredness or auspiciousness, just as *Aum* is used amongst the Hindus and *Bismillah* (In the name of Allah or God) amongst the Musalmans.

In religion God is conceived of as being with or without attributes (*Saguna* or *Nirguna*), with or without form [*Saḱara* (*Vyākṛta*) or *Niraḱara* (*Avyākṛta*)], and personal or impersonal (Absolute). In this description, both these aspects are very well recognised, though the personal aspect of Him finds its due emphasis, for the simple reason that it lies at the very root of the religious idea,

*One*—Emphasises the Unity of the Godhead, in the face of the religious Trinity, the threefold aspect of Divinity—the Hindu Trimurti—God looked on as Creator (Brahma), as Maintainer (Vishnoo), and as Destroyer (Shiva), and in the face of the Divine Intelligences, the Devas, Shining Ones (often mistranslated as Gods) of Hinduism, the angels of Christianity and the *Farishtas* of Islam. The existence of the only one True God is not inconsistent with the idea of or belief in the existence of a higher order of beings (Devas, angels, etc.) living on various planes other than the physical one, in utter subordination to Him, implementing His will and purpose and glorifying Him alone, (see stanzas V, XXVII and XXX). To illustrate the Oneness of God from the Great Gospel of Life, the Bhagwadgita, the epitome of religious thought and spiritual lore :

“In the One is rooted all the diversified existence.” (XIII, 31).

“He is the Great Eternal ; there is none higher than He.” (VII, 7 ; and VIII, 3).

“He alone is the Eternal, the Unmanifested One.” (VIII, 20).

*Omkar*—Is a most ancient, mysterious and mystic term in Hinduism for Godhead, absolutely

untranslatable and not a connotive term at all. Its recitation with devotion is considered the most effective way of reaching Him. "Those who die reciting *Om*," says the Bhagwadgita, "reach the highest goal" (VIII, 13).

"He is the *Pranava*" (*Om*) (B. G., VII, 8).

"He is the one syllabled *Om*" (B. G., VIII, 13).

"He is the *Om̐kara*" (B. G., IX, 17).

In the Sikh Scripture, *Om̐kar* is the letter O (the first vowel ੐ of the Gurmukhi alphabet) and stands as the symbol of the Eternal God. Coupled with the figure 1, preceding it, it is read as *Ek-om̐kara* or *Ekam̐kara*. In Guru Nanak's composition called *Om̐kar* in the *Rag Ramkali*, it is said that the letter O is the best in the three worlds.

*True Name.*—This is the highest conception of Divinity, insisted upon again and again in the poem. "God's threefold name is *Om*, *Tat* (That) and *Sat* (Truth)" (B. G., XVII, 23). "He is the only true and real Being" (B. G., IX, 19 ; XI, 37 and XIII, 13).

*Creator.*—It is mainly through His primal function of creating this universe that God is known. Thus says the Bhagwadgita:—

"He is the creator and destroyer of the universes" (VII, 6).



"He is the Eternal seed of all beings" (VII, 10).

"All beings have their root in Him" (IX, 4).

"All emanates from Him" (X, 8).

*Spirit.*—God is to be worshipped in spirit. The word in the text is *Purusha* (Sanskrit), meaning both the soul and the oversoul.

"He is in this body the Supreme *Purusha* (B.G., XIII, 23).

"He is the Supreme *Purusha*, Who, pervading all, sustaineth the three worlds" (B. G., XV, 17).

*Devoid of Fear.*—Being the mightiest of the mighty, God has nothing to fear from anything or anybody. Hence only those who are devoted to Him have none to fear except Him, since He has no rival. Fearlessness has therefore been placed at the top of all virtues in a devotee of God (B. G., XVI, 1). According to the Bhagwadgita, "None is greater than God" (VII, 7). "He has His feet and hands everywhere, and His eyes, heads and mouths everywhere. He is all-hearing and dwelleth everywhere" (XIII, 14). How mightiness and fearlessness go together, is well sung :

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control ;

These three alone lead life to sovereign power.

Yet not for power (power of herself  
Would come uncalled for), but to live by law,  
Acting the law we live by without fear ;  
And because right is right, to follow right,  
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

—Tennyson.

*Devoid of Hatred.*— God is love pure and simple. He cannot be inimical to anyone. It is a heresy to suppose that He has any selfish end in view or to cause trouble and misfortune to any one arbitrarily. Says the poet :

All nature is but art unknown to thee ;  
All chance, direction thou canst not see.  
All discord, harmony not understood ;  
All partial evil, universal good."

—Pope.

"He is the same to all," says the Bhagwadgita, there is none hateful to Him, none dear" (IX, 29).

"But those who bear no ill-will to any being are friendly and compassionate, unegoistic and forgiving," are, paradoxical as it may seem, "dear to Him," for the simple reason that "they shrink not away from the world, nor does the world shrink away from them." Such is their lovely way. (B. G. XII, 13 to 15).

*Beyond Death and Birth.*—This world is one of cause, space and time. None of these apply to

God, for He is the cause of causes, the first cause. There was no time when He was not, nor will there be a time when He will not be. In the Bhagwadgita He is described as the Imperishable (*Akshara*), the Unmanifested (*Avyakta*) and the Unborn (*Aja*) (VIII, 21; XII, 1, 3; II, 21 and XV, 17).

*Self-existent*.—The word in the text is *Saibham*, which may be the corrupt form, in Panjabi, of the Sanskrit *Swambhu* (*Swa*, self, and *bhu*, to be). It is the name of God to denote His absolute existence. As a corresponding idea, we have it in the Bhagwadgita that all beings, though they have their root in God, yet He stands independent of them, just as the mighty air moving everywhere is rooted in the ether, still the ether remains independent of air (IX, 4 and 5). The word *Saibham* is sometimes translated as self-effulgent, taking *bha* to mean light. God is referred to as the light of lights (B. G., VII, 8 and XIII, 18).

*Gur Prasadi*.—It is very difficult to give one meaning to these words and connect them with the sentence in a single sense. Hence they have been left untranslated with a view to making them intelligible through an explanation. They are two words, *Gur* and *Prasadi*. *Gur*, (*Guru*) means severally : (1) A secular teacher; (2) a spiritual

preceptor ; (3) God Himself as the Guru of Gurus, in that He is the greatest of the great and the supreme enlightener. In this last sense, it is used in the Bhagwadgita (XI, 43), as well as in Patanjali's *Yoga Darshan*, where God is described as *Purveshamapi Guru*, i. e., the Guru of the Gurus. Patanjali, by the way, enjoins meditation on God equally with that on a holy person, (*Veetraga*—a man free from the dross of worldly attachments—as he calls him). And such a person may be the spiritual preceptor. *Prasadi* is the Sanskrit *Prasad*, meaning favour, grace, peace, compassion, &c., having the small *i* at the end, in order to connect it with Gur by means of a preposition. Thus the two words *Gur Parsadi* both together mean, by the favour or grace of the Guru.

There being no verb in the whole of the Invocation, the question remains as to how to connect this part (*Gur Prasadi*) with the preceding words. Tradition, supplying the ellipsis, makes the whole passage to mean, either that the poem is commenced by the favour or grace of the Guru who is One Omkar, &c., or that the One Omkar, &c., is to be realised by the favour or grace of the Guru, the spiritual preceptor. Either of these two meanings is feasible. As regards the former meaning, there is this much to be said in

its favour that the passage, either in its full or brief form, is, as already stated, used to mark the commencement of a new topic or of an auspicious function. But the point against both these meanings, and more particularly the latter, is that it hardly seems quite in keeping with the subject in hand in a passage brimming over with the various attributes of Divinity (which passage has also been used as an ever-recurring formula for Invocation), to speak of any matter other than such attributes, or to talk of the need for a spiritual preceptor as a means of realisation. No wonder that we find a class of learned commentators offering another explanation, to wit, that the words *Gur Prasadi* mean the two epithets of God, namely, the Enlightener, and the Merciful. What, however, goes against this last explanation, admirable as it is, is that it obviously ignores the rules of script, so ably expounded by Prof. Tejasingh in his Vernacular commentary of the Japji. The learned professor, however, does not himself appear to have been quite consistent in his explanation of this passage, for while in his English commentary of the Japji he takes *Gur Prasadi* as the two epithets of God, he follows the traditional meaning in his Vernacular commentary.

2. *Japu*.—This word means recitation and gives the poem its name. It is the same as the well-known Sanskrit word *Japa*. *Japa* is one of the most ancient forms of worship. The Bhagwadgita taking the word *Yajna*, by means of which they worshipped God in the Vedic times, in its widest sense, speaks of *Japa* as a form of *Yajna* (X, 25).

*Japa*, as a means of divine worship, is of course performed for the purpose of communion with God by means of either reciting or reading any sacred text. In the olden days, when writing and printing did not come so easy, people often committed such texts to memory and repeated them day after day as a regular form of worship. So the *Japji* has been treated as a form of morning prayer amongst the Sikhs. Such repetition should, however, come from the heart with undivided attention, or else it will be reduced to an insensible and mechanical routine, having little effect on life and giving no tone to it. Meditation, therefore, on the meaning, the innermost meaning, of what is thus recited, forms the essence of such recitation. And the more one meditates the more of the meaning one finds in it. And it is then that one can truly understand such texts, and not through the aid of many and various commentaries, nor through any

empty and futile brain-rackings. All the same, many credulous people recite the text like parrots, considering it an act of great spiritual merit.

Commentators have generally taken the word *Japu* as a verb in the imperative mood, explaining that it conveys an injunction to recite what follows, *i. e.*, the whole poem from beginning to end. But Prof. Tejasingh, following the rules of script referred to above, takes it as a noun, because it has the *u* attached to the *p*, and not the short *i*, which would be the case if it were a verb, and for the further reason that the word *Japu* is preceded and followed by a full-stop, so as to separate it from what precedes and what follows it. It is therefore well to consider it as a heading of the poem.

3. *Shloka*.—God is here described as the only Reality (*Sat*) the Primal Being, the Eternal Verity ; all else is nought compared to Him, as He existed when all was nought. All the other attributes of Divinity so essential to His nature, such as Intelligence (*Chit*), Bliss (*Anand*), etc., are implied in this description of Him, for His very being is Joy and Knowledge. In the words of the Bhagwadgita, He is the Unmanifested Eternal (*Avyaktam*, *Sanatanam*), which “ in the destroying of all

is not destroyed" (VIII, 20). "The Real never ceaseth to be, the unreal hath no existence" (II, 16).

"The Real (*Sat*) is both true and good (XVII, 16).

"He is the only Reality, all else is false," says the Upanishad.

"I would state in a few words," says the sage Shankar Acharya, "the essence of what is stated in millions of books, to wit—

*Brahmana* is Real ;

The world is unreal.

The individual soul is *Brahmana* ;

All else is nought."

I.—This stanza, after making a passing reference to the various popular ways of achieving the human goal, which by the way, may at best be only very remote or secondary, gives the only direct way, which the author considers to be the best, as a result of his own knowledge and experience.

1. This line refers to the intellectual method, which, by way of abstruse, philosophical discussions confined to the mental plane, leads nowhere and is liable to land one in the dangerous swamps of atheism, agnosticism, nihilism, etc.



*Thought.*—The word in the text for “thought,” is *soch*, which is used thrice in different grammatical inflections, thus adding to the charm of diction. The word *soch* is easily confounded with another Sanskrit word somewhat similar in pronunciation, to wit, *souch* or *shouch*, meaning purity, and hence it has been rendered thus by some, the purport on the whole remaining the same, *i. e.*, the observance of external purifications like ablutions, etc., does not serve the real purpose.

2. This line refers to the common method of keeping silence (*maun*) and undergoing other such penances and austerities.

*Silence.*—The word in the text for “silence” is *chup*, which is used twice in different senses : first for outer, and then for inner silence, giving to the composition a beauty of its own.

3. Refers to the method of self-indulgence adopted by those who would know Him in the midst of worldly activities, satisfying all the multitude of their ambitions by great conquests and the accumulation of hoards of wealth. These would make self-indulgence a religion and would follow the Epicurean ideal of “Eat, drink and be merry,” honestly believing that perhaps by doing so they serve themselves well, but to their great

disillusionment in the end, when it is too late to remedy matters.

4. The method of "wit and learning," referred to here, though allied to that mentioned in line 1, is yet distinguishable from it. While the former method pertains to serious thinking and questioning of everything with a real desire and search for truth, the latter method is nothing short of sophistry, hair-splitting, diplomacy, pedantry, etc.

5 and 6. *Command*.—All these methods may be good, bad or indifferent, according as they are pursued, yet all are defective, or at best remote, but the method of methods—the direct and most effective method—is to obey the *Command* of God, in other words to surrender oneself absolutely to the Will of God.

The word for "command" is the Persian *Hukma*, imported from Islamic spiritual lore, thus laying the foundations of one common universal religion for the Hindu and the Muslim, the East and the West, if only the world would pay more attention to essentials than to non-essentials, to the spirit more than the form.

The words for "ordained" in the text are *Likhya Nal*, literally "Written with (man)." It means not a blind belief in the kind of fore-ordi-

nation akin to fatalism, negating all idea of and scope for human effort. What is meant is that over and above the limited human free will, there is the great All-powerful, All-knowing Intelligence and Will that governs and controls all by means of an absolutely just and immutable law, whose dictates prevail and can only be transgressed to our great peril, but according to which nothing can happen to any one except that which he deserves by his past actions in this or previous lives. All this comes out very vividly and forcefully as we proceed.

For like ideas, reference may be made to the Bhagwadgita :

“Nor sacrifices, nor Vedas, nor alms, nor rituals, nor deep study can win to men the vision of Him” (XI, 48).

“But He is known, seen and entered into by absolutely undivided devotion to Him alone” (XI, 54).

“Whatsoever thou doest, eatest, sacrificest, offerest, givest in charity, or doest by way of austerity, do thou that as an offering unto Him” (IX, 27).

All Actions should be surrendered to Him (III, 30 and XVIII, 57), placed in Him (V, 10), per-

formed for His sake and the fruits thereof renounced (XII, 10 and 11).

"Actions wedded to vanity and egoism and impelled by the force of lower desires and passions are demoniacal," and "Resorting to severe austerities under the impulse of such desires is to torment the body, within which God is seated" (XVII, 5 and 6); while the right sort of austerity is to worship the Guru, the Saints and one's betters; it is to be straightforward and harmless; and it is to speak what is truthful and pleasant, to avoid speaking vain and annoying things, to study the Holy Books, to keep the mental balance, and to entertain good and pure thoughts (XVII, 14 and 16). Man reaches perfection by the performance of his duty (XVIII, 45), which, in the words of the Japji, is obedience of the divine Command (I, 6). "God dwelleth in the hearts of all beings, by His sovereign power causing all beings to revolve as though mounted on a potter's wheel; therefore fly unto Him with all thy being, by His grace thou shalt obtain supreme peace, the everlasting dwelling place" (XVIII, 61 and 62). To the perfected man, individual free will is nothing. In fact his own will is merged in that of God (B. G., XVII, 65). He is only a pen in the hand of

God. He prays to God for nothing beyond, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." He has accepted God as his only master (*Swami*) and is ready to bear the cross for His sake.

II.—This stanza explains the nature of God's Command, obedience to which was enjoined in the preceding stanza. It is no arbitrary command dictated by whim and impulse, as may be the case with despotic kings and rulers on earth. It is the decree of an All-knowing and compassionate Providence, whose great plan, which is inscrutable, prevails in the governance of the huge universes, of which ours is but an insignificant fragment. He knows how best to adjudge all, and grant or withhold His gifts in pursuance of laws that work justly and unerringly, but most compassionately, to the general good of mankind and all. All this comes out very beautifully as we proceed.

1 and 2. *Manifestations*.—When attempting to describe His Command, the author is naturally staggered by the enormity of the task, and feels compelled to exclaim, "Oh, it is impossible!" Illustratively, though of course not exhaustively, something can be said on the subject. And the first thing said is what the Bhagwadgita says in its own charming way:

"All manifestation is from the Unmanifested" (VIII, 18). "All beings emanate from Him" (XI, 7). And they do so for the purpose of achieving perfection (greatness), which lies in "entering into Him again," through a course of discipline extended over many lives (VIII, 45 and 56; VIII, 16 and 19).

The ancient Vedic word for what is here called Command is *Karma*, which includes the whole law of cause and effect, so frequently touched upon in the Japji in its own way.

3 and 4—Refer to the process of human growth and evolution, so poignantly detailed in the Bhagwadgita (VI, 41 and 45). Man after death, it is said there, goes to higher worlds, and dwelling there for immemorial years, is reborn in a pure and blessed house, or he may be born into a family of enlightened Yogis, though such a birth is most difficult to attain, and then recovering the characteristics of his former birth, labouring again for his perfection, irresistably driven by his former practice, he goes on and on through births, until he reaches the supreme goal, the intervening lives being a round of trials and tribulations, of wealth and poverty and of many other such experiences, both internal and external.

5.—*Grace* is the grace of salvation, and *wandering* means man passing through many births and deaths until he is saved by the working of God's laws, which are summed up here in one word as the divine "Command."

6 and 7. *Self*—Of course the command is inexorable and no respecter of persons ; man's redemption lies in understanding and following it, and when he does so, his egoism is lost and the limited self which is the cause of all his misery and frequent births and deaths, is no more. The drop slips into the ocean : the part (*Ansh*) is united with the whole (*Anshi*), as it were.

III.—This stanza explains further the nature of the command, and for the matter of that, of the One who commands. There are many, it is said, who make attempts to describe Him, chanting His praises, each according to his own individual experiences. Thus, for example, they say :

He is All-powerful ;

He is All-merciful ;

He is All-good ;

He is incomprehensible ;

He is the Creator and Annihilator.

He causes human beings to be born again and again (for their final good of course).

And again, they say :

He is transcendental ;

He is immanent.

9 and 10. All these descriptions of Him are right, though only partially so, the fact of the matter being that "There is no end of His description." "Whatever is glorious, good, beautiful and mighty is only a fragment of His splendour" (B.G., X, 40 and 45 ).

11. *Giver*.—His most potent and most inevitable attributes towards humanity are His great Love, His Grace and Mercy, by which He blesses them, and His gifts in this world, with the grant of emancipation hereafter.

12 to 14. *Unconcerned*.—The world goes on by His compassionate, fostering care. Unlike the common people of the world, He feels not the least worry in doing this, for He is above it; so He is supremely happy, as if unconcerned with anything, though governing the worlds with remarkable care. For "There is nothing in the three worlds that should be done by Him nor anything unattained that might be attained; yet He mingles in action, since, if He mingled not in action unwearied, men all around would follow His path and come to destruction ( B. G., III, 22 to 24).



IV.—This stanza insists on God being worshipped in Love, that being the only effective way to emancipation.

1 to 4. *Love*.—Lines 1 to 4 reiterate what has already been said in the last stanza (lines 2, 11 and 12), as also in the Prologue, about God's Existence, Grace and Mercy, to emphasise the one great method of worshipping Him, namely that of Love. Unlike the greedy kings of this earth, God will accept no material benefit, nor lip-praise, but only that which comes from the depth of the loving heart of the devotee. "He who offereth to me a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water, that I accept from the striving aspirant, offering as he is with love and devotion" (B. G., IX, 26).

*He is described in boundless Love*.—Another version is : He is described in endless ways, and this on account of the double meaning of *bhao* in Sanskrit. This word is used in the sense of love in many places, such as V, 5 and VI, 1, and as a verb (*bhavan*) in XVII ; XXI, 3 and XXXVIII, 5; and it might preferably be used in this latter sense here.

5. *Meditate*.—Because of what is said above about the attributes of God, it is enjoined here that His true name should be meditated upon.

*The Life-imparting morning hour.*—The early hour of the morning is best suited for meditation, for it is then calm and quiet and man is fresh and free from the cares and worries of this workaday world. He can then easily and effectively fix his mind in meditation with undivided attention. Hence this time is called the life-giving time, *Amrit Vela* (literally, *amrit*, immortal and *vela*, time,) for divine meditation at this time does impart life eternal.

“Let the *Yogi* (aspirant) remain in a quiet place and by himself, and with subdued thought and controlled mind sit in meditation in an easy posture (*Padamasnam*), head and body erect, thinking on Me, aspiring after Me. And let him fix his gaze, with eyes and ears closed, on a point between the eye-brows, *Bhrouv-madhya* (the sixth *Chakram*, or Centre, where the soul of man resides). Thus shall he go to the supreme bliss abiding in Me” (B. G., V, 27 and VI, 10 to 15).

6 and 7. The subject is wound up by saying that by meditating on God as shewn above, man invites His Grace or Love (the two being synonymous), by which he achieves salvation, while by indulging in wordly desires (*karma*), he gets only the good things of the world, being born again and again.

The word in the text for garment is *kapra* (cloth), meaning material benefits and rebirth. The word for grace is the Persian word *nazar* (literally, sight), meaning favour, mercy, grace, etc. The word for action is the Sanskrit word *karma*. *Karma*, in Hindu Theology, is either *sakama* (interested) or *nishkama* (uninterested). In the former sense it means indulgence in the desires of the world, which is the cause of a man being born again and again. In the latter sense it means the doing of actions, worldly or otherwise, with no earthly desire but with a view to, and as a means of, the attainment of divinity, and is the cause of man's redemption. Here *karma* is evidently used in the former sense.

"Those who long for success in action, worship the *Devas*. Finite is the fruit thereof but My devotees come unto Me" (B. G., IV, 12 and VII, 23).

"The Yogi who is devoted to Me alone passeth the fruits attached to the deeds such as sacrifices and austerities, and goeth to the Supreme and ancient seat" (B. G., VIII, 28).

"Nor sacrifices, nor alms, nor works, nor penances, nor studies can win this vision of Me, but devotion to Me alone" (B. G., XI, 48 and 54).

"Abandoning all *dharma*s (that is, the *sakam*

*karmas*—actions done with a view to attaining material goods, heaven, good birth, etc.), come unto Me for shelter, sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins” (B. G., XVIII, 66).

V.—This stanza further dilates upon the worship of the True God in Love.

1. *Installed*.—God being the *Causa Causans*, cannot by His very nature be supposed to have been created or put into a place (installed). This may be taken as a gentle hint against the belief in many gods and goddesses, and against the common practice of *idol-worship*. Superstition, ignorance and lower levels of thought and character are always responsible for such beliefs and practices. We have seen from many quotations from the Bhagwadgita, the *Vade Mecum* of Hindu Religious lore, how the lofty ideals, preached by Guru Nanak about the Unity of the Godhead and the divine attributes, are rooted in Hinduism. The Bhagwadgita does, of course, refer to the belief in and the *worship of the Devas*, side by side with the worship of the One True God without a second, but it leaves no doubt that these *Devas* are only an order of creation (akin to the Angels and Farishtas in other religions) whose worship, though resorted to by worldly persons for certain worldly ends, is an obstacle to the

final achievement of man and can never take him to God. As a matter of fact, it has been a very great blunder in the past to translate the word *Deva* as God. This word is simply untranslatable; at the most it could be rendered as Shining one, which is the literal meaning of the word, as some of the more enlightened scholars, Europeans and others, have done. "Those whose wisdom hath been rent away by desires go forth to the *Devas*, resorting to various external observances according to their own nature" (B. G., VII, 20). "Those who worship the *Devas* go to the *Devas*, and to the ancestors (*pitris*) go the ancestor-worshippers, to the elementals (*bhutas*) go the bhuta-worshippers; but My worshippers come unto Me" (B. G., IX, 25).

As to idol worship, we have in Hindusim the knowledge of the One Absolute God, and it would be absurd to suppose that Hinduism supports or favours the blasphemous practices of the worshippers of stock and stone, implied in common idolatory or fetishism. It is of course quite a different thing to take a symbol for accentuating worship. Whatever our objections to symbolism as a creed, either on the score of expediency or of the abuse to which it is liable, we must ever avoid the silly mistake of considering

it as meaning to displace or dethrone the most High, Who is merely being symbolised. Man himself, it was said long ago, is made in the image of God, and this great universe is only a glorious representation of Him. Thus the Bhagwadgita :

“ I am the Self, seated in the heart of beings (X, 20).

“ I am *Vasva* of the Devas” (X, 22).

“ I am *Brahaspati* of priests, *Skanda* of generals, Ocean of the lakes” (X, 24).

“ I am *Bhrigu* of Rishis” (X, 25),

*Ashvatha* of all trees, *Kapila* of the Munis am I” (X, 27).

“ Of men I am the Monarch” (X, 27).

In short, “ Having pervaded this whole universe with a fragment of Myself, I remain” (X, 42).

Again—

“ Those devoid of reason think of Me, the unmanifest, as having manifestation” (VII, 24).

“ The foolish disregard Me when clad in human semblance, ignorant of My supreme nature, the great Lord of beings” (IX, 11).

2. *Self-existent*.—We have had the idea of the self-existence of God in the word *Saibham* in

the Invocation (Prologue). Here we have it in the different words *Ape Ap* (Himself alone).

*Unconditioned*.—The word *Niranjan* (literally, without blemish) is here translated as Unconditioned, as subjection to space and time would be the greatest drawback with regard to the Almighty. *Niranjan* is one of the many names of Divinity and is in mysticism considered as a name for worship on the very threshold of the path.

3. *Honourable*—Means acceptable in the sight of God.

6. *Home (ghar)*—Means a place before or near God, which is the real abode of man. Compare B. G., VIII, 28, where man, after perfection, is said to go to the supreme and ancient seat (*Asthana*).

7. The *Gurmukh*—(Literally, turned towards the Guru) is the chosen disciple, the elect who has wholly and solely devoted himself to God. He is the person who has acted up to the teaching in lines 4 to 6, and of whom it is said in line 3 that he has received honour before God.

*Nad*—Is in mysticism the inner divine music that plays within man and is heard by His devotees in certain stages of spiritual growth. What is intended to be conveyed here is that such a devotee, the *Gurmukha*, is the *nad*

himself, in other words, he constantly hears this exquisite music within himself. He is also the *Vedas*, i. e., is possessed of all the lofty and spiritual teachings of the Vedas—the four revealed Books of the Hindus : Rik, Sam, Yajur and Atharvan. And such a devotee does not feel himself shackled by the limitations of the body, but having realised his real self, becomes all-pervading which the *atma*, his inner soul, really and inherently is.

8. *Guru*.—God's devotee, referred to as *Gur-mukha* in the previous line, is further extolled. He is not only a *Gurmukh* (disciple), but he is also a Guru himself. Or it may be, as is often interpreted, that having extolled a *Gurmukh*, occasion is taken to extol the Guru himself. So it is said that the Guru is none other than the Divinity in its threefold aspect called Shiva, Vishnoo, and Brahma, as well as Parvati, known as the spouse of Shiva ; and it is explained that the mention of Parvati should be taken to include also Lakhshmi the spouse of Vishnoo and Saraswati, the spouse of Brahma.

Compare Bhagwadgita, Chapter X, where it is said, " I am Vishnoo, I am Varuna, I am all," etc., etc., and " the man who reaches Brahman is Brahman himself" (V, 24 ; VI, 15 and 27 ; XIV, 26



and XVIII, 53). It may, however, be noted that in mysticism God and the Guru are equally highly praised, and the same word Guru may be used to denote God and the spiritual preceptor both, *vide* the various meanings of Guru in the comments on the Prologue (Invocation).

9. Here is expressed the same inability to describe God, as was done in III, 9 and 10, and as is done in many other places throughout the Japji. It is indeed significant that Guru Nanak, great as he was, and is, never loses sight of this humble attitude towards God. In fact, the more one knows the more humble one feels on account of the smallness of one's knowledge. So also we find Arjun saying to God in the Bhagwadgita on his attaining the Vision of beatitude :

“Thyself indeed knowest Thyself by Thyself. Thou art incomprehensible” (X. 14 and 15).

The simple truth is that, though we can know something of God, yet it is impossible to know Him wholly.

10 and 11. These lines give a formula, *i. e.*, that repeated as a refrain at the end of the next stanza. The object is to emphasise the Love, the Grace, the Compassion of the Deity, without which nothing can be achieved. He should not,

we are reminded again and again, ever be forgotten.

VI.—Stanza VI, in further dealing with the purpose of life, which is the Worship of God in Love, draws attention to the need for adopting the right means to obtain that end. Reference is made to the popular practice of having purificatory baths in rivers, tanks, etc., at places of pilgrimage, and their true bearing on life is pointed out.

1. *Places of Pilgrimage*.—Resort to places of pilgrimage, as a matter of religious duty, is quite common amongst the followers of all religions. But people, forgetting the real object of pilgrimages, often perform them as a mere matter of form, to satisfy usage or custom only. Pilgrimages made with such a mental attitude, it is tersely pointed out, are of no use whatever. The only way they can be of any spiritual benefit, it is indicated, is if and when they are accompanied by the love of God within. All good, all value, lies in the right attitude, and nothing is so bad or so foolish as to take the shadow for the substance, the husk for the kernel.

In Hinduism holy places and persons are called *Tirathas* (from *tri*, to cross), on account of the holy associations connected with them for one

reason or another, in that they enable the aspirant on the path to cross the sea of worldliness. As a means to an end, they have certainly a value of their own, though it would be a mistake to take them as ends in themselves. Scriptures speak of the merit (*punya*) underlying pilgrimages, charity, etc., as aids to pure living, and as contributing to eventual emancipation (*mokṣha*). The Japji speaks of this traditional worth of *Tirathas* in several places. (See X, 2; XXI, 1 and XXVII, 12).

2. *Action*.—Those who consider that a mere dip in water, or for the matter of that, a mere visit to a place of pilgrimage, or a mere *darshana* (sight) of a holy person, will ensure final release (*mokṣha*), as sometimes the ignorant and the superstitious do, are sadly mistaken, and they know not the law. For the law is, “As you sow, so shall you also reap”—a universal law indeed. There is no royal road to divinity. You must work for it, and work hard, not light-heartedly, or spasmodically, but systematically and on a basis of proper instruction and prescribed discipline.

*Karma*, standing for action, is obviously taken from the Hindu doctrine of Karma. The Japji makes frequent reference to this doctrine and

accepts it with all its implications, including the doctrine of rebirth. (See IV, 6; XXXIV, 6; XXXV, 5; XXXVII, 8 and Shloka, 4).

3. *Gems, Jewels & Rubies*—Are those of spiritual wisdom. The sense is, either (1) that on following the instructions of the Guru, man receives from him the treasures of spiritual wisdom as it were; or (2) that man, being inherently divine, as is inculcated in Hinduism, manifests himself in his true nature if and when he receives the Guru's teachings.

*Listen*—This means both receiving the teachings and living up to them. For to the faithful, believing is knowing and knowing is doing. "Children, not sages," says the Bhagwadgita, "consider *sankhya* (knowledge) and *yoga* (action) to be different." To the knower they are one and the same. We shall know further what this listening really is. (VIII and XI).

This listening is much the same as the obedience to divine command, taught in I, 5 and 6, as the way to Truth.

*Guru*—May mean either God, or the Spiritual Preceptor who conveys the divine wisdom (see comments on V, 8 and 11).

VII.—The topic of divine worship in Love, commenced in IV, is here brought to a close after

a pointed comparison between the respective worth of the worldly and the spiritual life. Inordinate longevity, high name and great fame in the world, it is said, have no value if one knows not God.

1. *The Four Yugas*—Are the four ages or cycles mentioned in Hindu Books, namely—

(i) The *Satya Yuga*, in which *Dharma* stands on all its four legs, being at its highest glory. This is the Golden Age.

(ii) The *Tritya Yuga*, in which *Dharma*, losing a leg, stands on the remaining 3 legs. Virtue begins to decline. This is the Silver Age.

(iii) The *Dwapar Yuga*, in which *Dharma* stands on only 2 legs. There is more decay in virtue. This is the Copper Age.

(iv) The *Kali Yuga*, in which *Dharma* stands on only one leg. Virtue has greatly diminished, in fact almost vanished. This is the Stone Age of our modern times.

Centuries innumerable are assigned to each *yuga* in duration.

2. *The nine Continents*—Refer to the nine great geographical divisions of old, mentioned in books. *Khand* is a vast division of land, translated here as continent.

4. *Sight of God*—Means divine nearness. The word for sight is the Persian *nazar*, used in different places with a slight difference in sense. (See XXIV, 16; XXXII, 5; XXXIV, 9; XXXVII, 12 and XXXVIII, 6 and 7).

*Counted as nothing*.—That is, considered very low by the saints and sages whose opinion alone counts, about the right sense of proportion in spiritual matters.

5. *Worm of Worms, &c.*—The idiomatic sense has here been given. The literal rendering would be, such a person as knows not God is a worm within a worm, and one whom even a sinner would accuse of sin, the sense being that a person who neglects God for worldly goods is too contemptible a creature for words.

5, 6 and 7. And why is God to be worshipped? for any good to Himself? No! He is far above that. Truly has it been said that none can do Him any good, but He can do good to all, being All-good and lacking nothing. Man then needs to worship God for his own good, for God has the will and the power of reforming the greatest sinner, and being infinite Good, He makes a person already good more and more so, until he reaches the everlasting good. The word for good is the Sanskrit word *guna*, and that for

bad is *nir-guna*. Mark also its use in III, 3 ; V, 4, XI, 1 and XXI, 5. *Guna* is also used for divine attributes in XVIII, 5 and XIX, 5, and for Glories in XXVI, 1. In Hindu Theology it is used for the qualities of *prakṛiti* (matter) ; God is for that reason called *Nir-Guna*, i.e., free from the qualities of matter, free even from any attributes at all, being the Absolute Reality, the Unmanifest, the Indestructible (*Ayaktam, Akhsharam*) B. G. VIII, 21.

VIII.—The Japji now enters into a description of the state of those who, having engaged themselves in spiritual practices and discipline, are living a dedicated life. This life is highly eulogized, particularly in the four stanzas headed *Listening*, the four stanzas headed *Faith*, and the one stanza headed *Saints*, nine in all (VIII to XVI). It is sometimes said that these three sets of stanzas refer to the three stages of spiritual training laid down in Vedant, namely *shravan*, *manan* and *nidhiasan* ( listening, believing and realising ), and the fact of the use in the text of almost Vedantic words seems to give colour to this opinion. But going into the details of what is here stated under each of these heads about the state of a devotee, no marked and distinctive stages following one another, such as is the case in Vedanta, are in evidence. Clearly each stanza, as also

each line and each refrain, stands by itself, each mentioning in its own way the various characteristics and surpassing merits of a devotee who is on the way to the pinnacle of glorious nearness to God. The use of the words listening and believing need not deceive us, for these are used in the text quite a number of times, and each time they denote, not any comparative stage but a state by itself of the higher consciousness (V, 5; VI, 3 and XXI, 3). This description of the states of God-consciousness (VIII to XVI) somewhat resembles that of the enlightened man in the Bhagwadgita, II, 55 to 72, XII, 13 to 20 and XIV, 21 to 27.

1. *One knows the adepts.*—There being no verb in the original of this line, the verb *knows* has been supplied, according to the sense of the context. Considering that knowing and being are one, the right meaning would be that by listening to God, that is, by realising Him, one becomes adept, etc. The words for Adepts, *Saints* and *Masters* in the text are *Siddhas* (Sanskrit), *Peers* (Persian) and *Surnaths* (Sanskrit), respectively, all having practically the same sense, namely, devotees of God living more or less the higher life. Compare B. G. II, 69, where the words



*Sanjmi* (disciplined) and *Muni* (sage) are used with a similar meaning.

2. *One knows the earth*, etc.—Here also there is no verb, and the word *knows* has been supplied to give the sense, the idea being that on this path to God one has knowledge of every place, that is, one acquires the occult powers of tele-audience and tele-vision.

*Nether Regions*.—The word in the text for this is *Dhawal*, meaning literally *bull*, and derivatively *nether region*, where is said to stand the bull supporting the earth. Be it noted that the mythological theory of the bull supporting the earth is taken up in stanza XVI, and refuted.

3. *One knows the secrets of earth*, etc.—Here again the verb is absent, and the *earth* and the *nether* and *higher regions* are again mentioned with simply a difference in the words employed. By supplying the words *knows* and *secrets*, the sense is given to the passage, to wit, by realising God one knows the secrets that abound everywhere, on earth, beneath the earth and above it; in other words, one obtains all knowledge and acquires natural and supernatural powers. Hindu treatises on Yoga, for example, Patanjali's *Darshana*, lay down rules of *sanjam* (deep concentration) by

which one acquires powers over fire, water, etc., so as to control their actions at will.

4. *One remains unhurt by death.*—By means of the mystic powers mentioned in books on Yoga, one can live in this body for any length of time he may desire.

5 and 6. These lines are clear enough, they constitute the closing refrain in all the four stanzas (VIII to XI), which, as they also begin with the same word, *Listening*, are allied to each other by a common theme. Eulogising the devotee, these lines give briefly the fruit of devotion, namely, the escape from rebirth by the ending of man's sins and pains.

IX.—1. As before, the word *knows* has been supplied to make sense, there being no verb in the original passage.

Other versions of this line are—

- (1) By listening to God one attains to the status of Brahma, Shiva, etc.
- (2) By hearing God's name, Shiva, Brahma and Indra come into being.

The elliptical style gives ample scope to various interpretations according to one's particular imagination.

2. This line offers some difficulties in translation, there being simply three words without any apparent grammatical connection, namely, *mukh* (mouth or face), *salahan* (to praise) and *mand* (bad). Another likely interpretation is that the lofty (*mukh*) and the lowly (*mand*) praise Him. There is yet another version, given by a learned modern scholar (Prof. Tejasingh), who, connecting lines one and two, renders them thus :—  
 “Next, this instruction will make the disciple realise the true significance of the powers represented by Shiva, Brahma and Indra, and he will begin to dislike offering praise to them.”  
 This ingenious construction is rather a reflection on the common Hindu belief in Devas (see comments on Devas in V, 1).

3 and 4. *Practices of Yoga, etc.*—In the science of Yoga inculcating the way to realise God, many practices and disciplines are given for concentrating the mind in order to engage in deep meditation. For the purpose of these practices and disciplines, it is also necessary to know well the physical constitution of man. A devotee of God, it is therefore said, knows all this as well as the Smritis, Shastras and Vedas. The Smritis are hoary traditions reduced to writing, the Shastras are holy teachings in general and the Vedas are

the revealed Books (see comments on V, 7). Here also the same learned scholar adopts a version of his own, namely, that "He (the disciple) will come to know the secrets of physical nature and the unifying spirit working behind it. And in the light of that knowledge he will be able to correct his views about the Smritis, Shastras and Vedas."

X. 1. For the spiritual qualities mentioned in this line, compare Bhagwadgita II, 55 to 57, XIII, 8 to 12 and XII, 13 to 20.

2. Note the tone here about the Hindu pilgrimages, which cannot be taken as condemnatory. The 68 places of pilgrimage are again mentioned in XXVII, 12. It is not known what particular places are included in this number; or perhaps the number is simply given to indicate that there are many of them (see comments on VI, 1. regarding pilgrimages).

3. Compare the idea in V, 3.

XI. 1. For the high spiritual qualities mentioned here, compare Bhagwadgita XVI, 1 to 3.

2. *King*, i. e., a king among saints. They call Guru Nanak, *Sacha Badshah*, the true king. So every Guru or spiritual guide would be a king to his disciples. Besides, we had the *Raj-Rtshis*

(king-sages) like Janka and others, who lived for the public good alone (B. G., III, 20). We had such king-sages in the Caliphs of Baghdad who were kings both temporal and spiritual. The words herein used for sage, spiritual preceptor and king, are all taken from Persian literature.

3. *The blind*--Refers to persons blind as regards the knowledge of God. Or may be the physically blind are also meant, on whom the elect of God, like Christ, would bestow sight.

4. The language of this line may be taken in the metaphorical sense so as to mean, that which is most difficult to know is known to the worshipper of God. The translation given here is rather idiomatical. The literal translation would be, the sea becomes (small as) a hand. Another version may be that to the worshippers of God the small (as a hand) becomes great (as the sea).

XII.—*Faith*.—The word in the text is (*mane*) which others have translated as *Believing* or *Obeying*. Practically there is not much difference in meaning between the three terms, as, rightly speaking, right belief which is the same thing as faith in God, must always lead to obedience to Him. It is only lip faith or superficial belief or credulity that is not accompanied or followed by proper action. As religion is concerned with faith

in the highest sense of the word, we must also avoid confounding faith with what is called blind faith. It is the faith that moves mountains, as they say. It is the intuitional knowledge, spoken of in X, 2 of the Bhagwadgita. Its equivalent in Hindu religious literature is *shraddha*, an unswerving but reasoned faith, the *sattvik* or rational faith that leads to pure worship, pure asceticism, pure charity, pure food and every kind of pure action (B. G., XVII, 2 to 22). Armed with this faith, one has the mastery of his senses, obtains wisdom, is not bound by actions, goes swiftly to supreme peace and is established in Yoga. Without it, he is lost for ever and goes to destruction (B. G., IV, 39 to 42). The Japji, therefore, rightly lays great stress on Faith in this and the three succeeding stanzas.

2. *Repents*.—The repentance is due to having tried a task which is impossible of being accomplished, as is said in line 1.

5 and 6. *Holy Name*.—These lines give the best definition of Faith of the right sort, to wit, Right Faith is that which knows God. The construction of line 6 is not, however, easy to understand. Hence this line is variously translated:

(a) "Who think on it (God's name) are filled with joy." (Dr. Caleb).

(b) "Oh, if one knew how to obey it (God's word) with all one's heart and soul !" (Prof. Teja Singh).

(c) "Whoever obeyeth God knoweth the pleasure of it in his own heart." (*Macauliffe*).

These two lines form the closing refrain of the four stanzas (XII to XV) which begin with the common word *faith*.

XIII.—2. The idea here is common with VIII, 2 and 3. It is said in Patanjali's *Yoga Darshana* that by concentration (*sanjam*) on the Sun (which is the centre of the solar system), a Yogi acquires the knowledge of that region ; and the commentary of Vyasa gives a long description of this region consisting of many *Lokas*—*Bhur*, *Bhuvar*, *Swar*—and their many sub-divisions, our planet Earth (*Bhumi*) being one of them.

3. *Hurt*.—It is sometimes stated in commentaries that *hurt* here means punishment after death. It might equally well mean any physical or moral injury.

4. *Goes not to Death*.—That is, attains life immortal and blissful, free from the necessity for births and deaths. (B. G., II, 71 and 72). The idea is common with VIII, 4.

XIV. 1. *Obstacles*.—The idea is that one who

has true faith does not fall back but goes on progressing infinitely.

2. *Honoured*.—Gives about the same idea as in V, 3 and X, 3.

3. *Bye-paths*.—The idea is that by faith one goes straight on the Path to Divinity without fear of losing one's way. The word in the text for bye-path is *mag*, which is followed by the word *n*, meaning not. Some people combine the two and read it as *magn*, meaning absorbed, thus giving line 3 the following meaning. By faith one goes one's way absorbed in ecstasy.

XV.—1. *Salvation*.—Compare B. G., XIV, 20, where an enlightened person is spoken of as being liberated from births and deaths.

2. *Save*.—Compare Shlokas, 5 and 6, where it is said that the perfected persons save many others along with them. In fact those who are saved consider it their duty to work for the salvation of others (B. G., III, 25). They save others by means of teaching and leading.

3. *Guru*.—By faith man attains to the status of Guru, and saves his disciples.

4. *Wanders not abegging*.—That is, not begging for the Truth, for he already has it; or wanders not from birth to birth, as was said in



II, 5. Or again, wanders not for alms, for God provides for him (B. G., IX, 22).

XVI.—1. *Saints*.—The word in the text is *Panch*, literally five, and popularly the five representatives of a community, elected for their merit and worth. Saints are also called *panch* (representative), as they may be said to be the representative men or the elect of God, because of their saintliness.

2. *Honour*.—The idea here is common with that in V, 3; X, 3 and XIV, 2.

3. *Courts of Kings*.—The Rishis of old were highly honoured in the Courts of Kings, whom they visited to give them advice on spiritual matters. The kings also invoked the help of the Rishis against public disasters.

4 and 5. *The only Guru of the saints is divine meditation*.—The saints pass beyond the stage of discipleship. They are a law unto themselves. They can never transgress, being in tune with the Infinite. The idea finds beautiful expression in the B. G. (XVIII, 63), where at the close of the teachings which he has so well imbibed, Arjuna is given the advice, "Do as thou wilt." Other versions of line 4 are :

(1) The attention of the elect is bestowed on the Guru.

(2) Their only guide in life is the constant thought of God.

6. This line takes up a new topic, which is continued in the rest of this stanza, as well as in stanzas XVII to XIX. That topic is that there is a Divine Plan by which God works, and that this Plan is indescribable and incomprehensible (*cf.* B. G., X, 40), and by way of illustration, the question is taken up as to how our own planet Earth remains in its place.

7 to 12. *There is Dharma's Bull.....Who bears the Bull itself ?*—According to folk-lore, the earth is supported by a bull. This is palpably untenable and absurd, because there is not simply this earth alone but a multitude of planets to support, and the questions arise how can this bull bear the load of them all, and what supports the supporter, the bull ? The truth, it is said, is that by the Divine Plan, the whole universe stands and fulfils its purpose. God in His compassion maintains the whole of it. In His compassion He also gave man his religion or *Dharma* by which he is enabled to keep himself in contentment (happiness). The bull too is the bull of *Dharma*, which is born, as it were, out of divine compassion, and remains tied by the rope of contentment.

13 and 14. *The names.....pen.*—These lines state the fact that God is the Creator of the whole of the huge variety of existences. The imagery of the earth being created by God as a temple, with its nights and days, the various seasons, the elements and the living beings of many different kinds and species upon it, is beautifully given in XXIV.

15 to 18.—Emphasise the vastness and indescribability of the whole creation.

19 and 20. *One word.....countless streams.*—There is the Vedantic verse :

“He desired : I am one, may I be many : and all came into being.” (*Tadekḥshat ekoham bahu shyama prejayeya*). These lines strike almost the same note in their own charming manner.

*Word*—is *Kvao* (Sanskrit *Vaṇa*) the same, as *Bani* in XXI, 7. *Word* is God's word, or God Himself.

*Streams*—Are streams of creation.

21 to 24. *What power.....for ever.* — These lines give expression to a sublime emotion. Reflecting on the workings of the Divine Laws for the good of man, the devotee's heart is filled to overflowing with a feeling of gratitude. He wants to pay God tributes of praise and thanksgiving, but feels himself baffled. He then thinks

of offering himself as a sacrifice, unworthy though it be, at the altar of Divinity, in return for the innumerable blessings he is receiving, but in this also he feels embarrassed, by reason of the utter worthlessness of his offering. He, therefore, ends in a helpless sort of way by saying that to please God is the only good thing in the world, and that therefore man should always abide by His will and pleasure, for He pervades everywhere and exists at all times. This is what was enjoined as obedience of divine command in I, 6.

For *Power* in line 21, the word used in the text is *Kudrat* (Persian), which is sometimes translated as Nature in which case the rendering of this line would be, who can describe Nature? These lines form the closing refrain in the three following stanzas (XVII to XIX), thus connecting all the four stanzas in one common theme, started with line 6 of this stanza. Compare somewhat similar sentiments in the Bhagwadgita: "As marvellous one regardeth Him; as marvellous another speaketh of Him; yet, having heard, none indeed understandeth" (II, 29).

XVII.—This stanza describes how in this vast universe innumerable creatures are engaged in the worship of the One God in innumerable ways.

1. *Recitations*.—The word in the text is *Jap*. See comments on the Prologue ( *Japu* ).

*Devotions*.—The word used is *bhao* as in IV, 1, where it was translated as Love. See comments thereunder.

2. *Adorations*.—The word in the text is *puja*, which is the popular method of worshipping God. In it the outward visible acts of showing reverence play a great part, such as bowing down with joined palms as in Hinduism, or kneeling down as in Christianity, or adopting alternate postures of standing and sitting in *nimaz* form as in Islam.

*Penances*.—The original word is *tapa*, another well-known method of worship. See comments on I, 2.

3. *Read the Vedas and holy Books*.—This is also a form of worship. It is one of the five *Maha-Yajnas* in Hinduism. Other versions, due to the various meanings of *mukha*, are—

( i ) Read from books and recite the Vedas from memory (*mukha*) ;

( ii ) Read chief (*mukha*) books, and the Vedas. See comments on V, 7.

4 and 5. *Yoga practices*.....  
*divine attributes and wisdom*.—The reference is to the methods of concentration such as are given in Patanjal's *Darshana* and other books on Yoga.

7. *The Brave ones facing the Steel*—Are possibly those who carry on crusades, and expose themselves to danger for the sake of righteous causes.

8. *Absorbed in deep meditations*.—A method of worship. See I, 2.

The features of life mentioned in this stanza are of the nature of what in the Bhagwadgita are called divine properties (*daivi sampadi*), while the reverse of these, called demoniacal properties (*asuri sampadi*), are enumerated in the next stanza. (B. G., XVI, 1 to 6).

9 to 12.—See comments on XVI, 21 to 24.

XVIII.—As stated above, this stanza dwells on the baser part of human nature, or demoniacal properties. In God's world there is place for both good and evil. Both have their place in the divine plan to work out for ultimate good.

7. *The Unclean*—The word in the text is *malechhas* (outcasts). It has also been rendered as evil-minded persons.

*Eating Filth*.—"Malbakḥ" (herein translated as filth) may mean also eaters of filth, *i. e.*, the animals like sheep, pigs, etc., which eat filth. Hence those who eat the flesh of such animals may be said to eat filth. The point may be to

condemn the eating of impure or forbidden food generally, and flesh eating particularly, because the flesh of animals pollutes the body and renders higher spiritual progress impossible. It is also said that this refers to the evil of backbiting, which has been spoken of in books as being like the eating of filth.

9. *Humble Nanak*.—The fact that Guru Nanak feels himself to be humble, is a true sign of his greatness, as the greater a man is the more humble he feels, and behaves.

10 to 12. See comments on XVI, 21 to 24.

XIX.—This stanza dwells on the omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence of the Almighty, who enables all, by His Power, Wisdom and Grace, to do their allotted part in life and to work out their destiny.

3. *Praise Him with bowed Heads*.—Other versions are :

(1) Even to say that His names, abodes and worlds are countless (as said in 1 and 2) is to take on one's head a load (of sin).

(2) Countless are the persons who praise Him while standing on their heads (a practice of asceticism known as the (*Kapal Asan*)).

(3) Even to say *countless* is to commit oneself.

These versions are due to the various meanings, metaphorical and literal, of the words *sir bhar* in the text.

4 to 6. *By the letters .....spoken about.*—The sense of these lines is that God, the Indescribable, is described by man in some form of human speech, some language, some words or some letters—*aksharas* as they are called in Sanskrit. This, by the way, is due to human limitation, human egotism, despite the fact that God Himself is amenable to no language : His only language is the language of the soul. Thus people describe Him in various methods and languages.

7 to 9. *By the letters inscribed, &c.*—By means of a pun on the word for *letters* (*aksharas*), it is suggested in these lines that it is these “letters of destiny” which decide for each man how far he shall succeed in describing the Indescribable. Carrying on the pun, it is further said that man has, according to the popular notion, his letters of destiny written in the lines of his forehead; but God is bound to no such destiny, having nothing written on His forehead. He can do as He pleases, and in fact He does do as He deems fit, and what He deems fit is always best, for He is All-wise. This is the essence of religious teaching; and it is in no way inconsistent with the idea



of human responsibility for action, implied in the Hindu doctrine of *Karma*, or the rule of retributive justice, etc., for being All-knowing and All-merciful, the regulation of all is in His adept hands. See comments on Karma, Fatalism, etc., in I, 6. The subject of *Karma* is a chapter by itself, and is most appropriately dealt with in the next two stanzas.

12 to 14. See comments on XVI, 21 to 24.

XX.—A new theme is commenced here, namely, that of man's responsibility for his actions, with a view to drawing man's attention to the need for divine worship, which of course is the main topic of the poem. This and the next stanza (XXI) have therefore to be read together.

1 to 6. These lines state, by means of a simile, how the dirt of worldliness is to be removed by the worship of God through the constant remembrance of His Holy Name. Compare IV, 5, where meditation on the greatness of God's name is advised.

7 to 9. These lines lay down the law of man's responsibility for his actions. This was hinted at in IV, 6, and VI, 2, and is emphasised in XXI, 6, XXXIV, 6 and 10, XXXV, 5 and shloka, 4.

Line 7 clearly belies the notion of any claim to virtue by heredity, or that of any taint of birth. In line 8 the reference is to the record of man's actions which is always being prepared for him by *Dharamraja's* agents, the *Chitguptas* referred to in XXVII, 5.

Line 9 sounds Biblical.

10. This line points to the fact that God administers everything. By His administration men meet birth and death in accordance with their actions.

XXI.—1 and 2. For remarks on Penance and Pilgrimages see comments on VI, 1. Here it is stated that the result of pilgrimages, etc., is as insignificant as an oilseed, compared to that of divine communion. Compare Bhagwadgita VIII, 28, regarding the comparative worth of sacrifices (*yajna*), alms, etc., *viz* : The fruits of meritorious deeds attached in the Vedas to sacrifices, austerities and almsgiving, the Yogi passeth all these by having known this and goeth to the supreme and ancient seat.

In fact, in Hinduism, in order to achieve salvation, good acts must be done without any desire for fruits, in the spirit of the Bhagwadgita (III, 9), or else they will have a binding effect and be an obstruction to *mokṣha*, whatever secular

advantage they may bring. Likewise the Japji also warns men against the danger of considering these meritorious deeds merely, as all-sufficient. What is, however, most important is the inner Pilgrimage, *i. e.*, Love of God, as pointed out in the next line. As to the question of dispensing with such meritorious deeds, even after realization (a question which is often raised in religious discussions), the advice in the Bhagwadgita is, "Acts of sacrifice, gifts and austerity should never be relinquished, but should always be performed" (XVIII, 5) ; but as stated over and over again in the Bhagwadgita, they should be performed without a desire for fruits and in a spirit of non-attachment, solely with the idea that such acts are enjoined. Sometimes these lines are so translated as to mean that pilgrimages, etc., yield a maund of fruit for a small measure (oilseed) of deed, taking oilseed (*til.*) and maund (*man*) as measures of weight. This construction, due as it is to the double meaning of *man* (merit and maund), hardly suits the context.

5. This line emphasises the need for making God one's exclusive goal, for He is All-good, and man, without realizing Him, is worth nothing at all.

7 and 8. Here a new topic, that of Inscru-

table Providence, is begun, and is continued in the six succeeding stanzas (XXII to XXVII). These lines purport to say that God is all in all.

*Bani*—Is the *One Word* (*Kvao* or *Vakā*) of XVI, 19 (q. v.) which manifested all. *Bani* is a comprehensive Sanskrit word. It means anything spoken or written, specially a sacred reading or writing, and here it is used in the sense of the primal word.

*Brahma*.—See comments on V, 8, where God is stated to be Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, etc. The sense of the whole passage is that God is the *Causa Causans*, both the material and the efficient cause of the universe, which is the predominant idea in the Japji. Compare "Vasdeva is all" in B. G. VII, 19.

Other versions of line 7 are :

(1) The benediction Brahmans give to men is 'Blessing on you'; but He the Lord is pleased with those who in their heart yearn after Him. (*Dr. Caleb*). In this version Brahma (for which the word in the text is *Barmao*, the Punjabee form of Brahma) is read as Brahman, the priestly class. (2) From the self-existent (*swaste*) proceeded *maya* (*Ath*) whence issued a word (*Bani*) which produced Brahma and the rest. (*Macauliffe*).

(3) 'Blessing on Thee' ! is said to have been the first salutation that Brahma addressed Thee.

*Ath.*—This is an obscure word given in line 7, the meaning of which is not quite clear. See Introduction, page 13.

9 to 14. *What was the time.....is known to Him alone.*—The question is raised as to when creation began. This question comes in naturally as arising from the preceding lines. In his own beautiful way, the Guru, after stating that the Hindu and Mohammadan religions had not been able to trace the origin of creation, most aptly gives his own conclusion by saying that the Creator alone knows this, for none existed before Him. Thus says the Bhagwadgita, "Thyself indeed knowest Thyself by Thyself, O Purushottama, Source of being, Lord of beings, Deva of Devas, Ruler of the worlds" (X, 15).

15 to 18. *How shall I invoke Him ?* etc.—Having said so much, the question is raised as to how then to describe and praise Him. Suffice it to say, it is answered, that He is the one true mighty Lord. All happens according to His Command, and a person who does not realize this cannot be considered as having realised God, and therefore he is not saved. Line 18 is capable of two different interpretations, due to

the not very clear construction of the words *Apau Jane*. (literally, to know by oneself, or of one's own accord). These are :—(1) One who is proud, (2) one who thinks he can know God unaided—looks not beautiful in the life to come. A somewhat similar idea seems to be expressed in Psalm 101 (verse 5) : Him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

XXII.—The topic of Inscrutable Providence, started in the last stanza (from line 7), is continued here, with special reference to His limitless creation.

1 and 2. The regions that were mentioned in VIII, 2, as known to the enlightened ones, are said here to be eternal.

*Vedas*—See comments on V, 7.

3. The construction of this line is not very clear. What one may surmise it to mean here is that the Vedas and other scriptures made a search for the limits of creation ; the Vedas said that they could not find any limits, while the other scriptures gave long expositions thereon. Still in the end all agreed that God's creation was limitless.

*Books*—Are the Muslim holy books, or the holy books of all Semetic religions, namely the Hebrew, Christian, etc. The word *Kateban* (used

for books) is the corrupt form of the Persian plural for *Kitab*, a book.

*Eighteen Thousand Worlds.*—It is a moot point whether the books in question do in fact mention the specific number of 18,000 worlds, or whether the idea merely is to convey the impression of a multitude of worlds. The text, however, does not give any word for *Worlds* along with the number 18,000. Therefore some consider that the number 18,000, refers to so many shlokas of the Bhagwat. Others think that the 18 Puranas and the thousand Rishis are referred to.

*Truth is the same*—i. e., what is said by the Vedas is also said by other books, namely, the limits of creation cannot be traced. Another meaning of this part of the line is that there is but one principal or substance (*Dhat*), conveying the idea that the Vedas and other books agree on the point that all the immense variety of creation has one common source (God), even as many vessels are made of one and the same metal.

5. This line repeats almost the same sentiments as those in XVI, 15.

6. The idea here is almost common with that in line 14 of the last stanza.

XXIII.—The topic of Inscrutable Providence is continued here, with special reference to His profound wisdom.

3 and 4. These lines emphasise the paramount importance of true worship.

*Kings who . . . ocean*—Literally, Sea Kings (*Samund Shah Sultan*), hence kings owning seas. This is also rendered as Kings as big as seas.

*Great hoards of Riches.*—The words in the text are *Girha seti Maldhan*. *Seti* is to possess. *Girha*, or *Gira* in Sanskrit means mountains and in Persian, purse; coupled with *Maldhan* (Riches), it would mean mountains or purses of riches, to wit, immense wealth.

*Ant*—Implies an humble or ordinary person, as compared with kings, princes and nobles. The sense is that even a common person, who keeps God in mind, is superior to a king who forgets God. It is said that the mention of the *ant* has reference to an olden story, mentioned in Islamic literature, of the ants, having by means of divine worship, seized from King Solomon, who had forgotten God at one time, his ring by the charm of which he ruled a large kingdom, thus reducing him to the condition of penury, until he worshipped God again and so regained the charm, and with it his kingdom.



XXIV.—The topic of Inscrutable Providence is continued here, with special reference to His Infinite Magnificence.

1 and 2. Compare Bhagwadgita X, 40 and 41 ; also Japji XVI, 15 and 16 and XXII, 5.

3. This line means that He sees and hears all. Another version is that in His creation, the things and beings which can be perceived by the senses are infinite, like the numberless bacteria hardly visible, and the multitude of worms living underground. Still another meaning is that He cannot be known fully by our senses of sight and hearing.

4. This line means that His purposes or His inmost secrets cannot be known.

10. This line literally means, that the more one describes Him, the more indescribable He becomes.

13 and 14. These lines mean that none can be as high as He is, and none can therefore know Him.

15. Compare XXII, 6.

16. See comments on IV, 6.

*Gift (Dat)*,—i.e., the gift of salvation or God-realization.

*Grace and Mercy*—The words in the text for these are the Persian words *Nazar* and *Karm*.

The Sanskrit word *Karma*, meaning action, is extensively used in the Japji, as well as the Persian word *Karam*, meaning mercy. See comments on IV, 6. As therein stated, the use of this word, sometimes in the Persian and sometimes in the Sanskrit sense, is often the cause of doubt and confusion. See Introduction, pages 9—11.

XXV.—The topic of Inscrutable Providence is continued here, with special reference to His gifts and bounties.

3. *Unrivalled warriors beg of Him*.—Another version is that warriors beg of Him unbounded gifts; the word *Apar*, here translated as *unrivalled*—an adjective qualifying *warriors*—being rendered as unbounded, and treated as an adjective qualifying an omitted word gifts.

5. *Idle*.—*Beḱar* in the text is the Persian word meaning idle. Some take it as the Sanskrit word *vikar* meaning frivolous, the sense remaining the same.

8 and 9. The idea is that what we consider evil for ourselves is meant for our ultimate good. God knows the reason for all that befalls us. He is All-compassionate and All-wise.

10. The idea is that God knows best what is best for us. (See comments under VIII, 6).

*Liberation and Bondage*—Refer to the doctrine in Hinduism, of *Mokṣha* (freedom from birth), on the one hand, and of subjection to the cycle of births and deaths, on the other. God, it is said here, grants these according to His laws.

11 to 13. *There is none to intervene*, etc.—These lines emphasise the fact that God's will is supreme. "Thy will be done" is the motto of all who have faith in Him. Those who have no faith, and act otherwise, are soon disillusioned after suffering a good deal on account of their ignorance and doubts. This may also convey the idea of there being no mediator between God and man, as is sometimes believed by theologians.

14. This line emphasises the fact of God being the All-dispenser, He need not be informed by anybody what are the wants of His creation.

16 and 17. The idea is once again conveyed that one is enabled only by divine grace to know God. See IV, 6, with comments.

*King among Kings*.—Nanak refers to one who sings the praise of God as a king among kings, for, having known God, he has risen above all earthly wants, needs and ambitions, and his heart is filled with supreme bliss. Compare Bhagwad-gita VII, 2, where it is said that having acquired divine knowledge, one needs nothing more. See

also XXVII, 22. Another version is that God, the King of Kings, gives unto these few the boon of praising Him.

XXVI.—The topic of Inscrutable Providence is continued here, with special reference to divine compassion and justice.

*Glories.*—The word *Guna* (Sanskrit), translated here as glories, and the word *sifteen* (Persian), used in XXIV and translated as attributes, are almost synonymous. A commentator, however, translates *Guna* here as virtue, which does not seem suitable to the context. The business in divine glories is man's contemplation of them.

2. The dealers in divine business are His devotees, and their stores (merchandise) their discourses, etc., on the divine glories.

3. *Customers.*—Are the aspirants who go to God's devotees to hear their discourses.

4. *Divine Love.*—For man is eulogised. Compare VI, 1.

5 and 6. God's justice is eulogised here.

7. *His gifts.*—The word in the original for gifts is the Persian *Bakhshish*, which may also have another meaning, that is, forgiveness (of sins), as in II, 5.

8. *Compassion and Command.*—Are denoted respectively by the Persian words *Karm* and

*Farman.* As to the former, see XXIV, 16 and XXV, 11, and as to the latter, see VIII, 6, for the similar Persian word *Hukma* meaning command.

9. This line is the keynote of this stanza, being the subject in point from XXI, 7.

10 to 22. These lines give illustrations of those who are engaged in describing God, each in his own peculiar way. This line of thought is pursued in the next stanza also.

10. His devotees, in the course of their description for praise of God, become so deeply absorbed that they forget everything else, even their own self, and are unable to say what exactly He is like.

11. *Puranas*.—Ancient sacred Hindu books.

14. *Govind*—The name of Shri Krishna.

*Gopees*.—The spouses of Shri Krishna or the milk-maids of Brindaban.

16. *Buddhas*.—Are enlightened souls who have realized God by intense devotion. They are enlightened by God, in that they worship Him. Gautam Buddha bore this title.

17. *Danvas and Devas*.—Are the celestial beings of the lower and higher order, respectively. See comments on IX, 1 & B. G., X, 14.

19 and 20. The idea is that the old and the young all sing to Him, yet none succeeds in doing

justice to the subject of His praise, as it is too vast.

24. The idea is common with that in XXVI, 6 and XXIV, 15, and like line 9 forms the keynote of the whole stanza.

Another version is—Him only, O Nanak, know as true. (Dr. Caleb).

25 and 26. *Impious One*.—Is *Bol-Vigad* (*Bol*, speech, and *Vigad*, spoiling). Some render it as impious speech, giving the following sense to these lines : “One who speaks impious words of Him is the fool of fools.”

XXVII.—The topic of Inscrutable Providence, commenced in XXI, 7, is brought to a close in this stanza, which deals with its aspect of divine sovereignty.

1 to 3. These lines purport to state that God is mighty, and the supreme ruler, and that the whole creation, including the celestial beings and the great sages, are engaged in singing His praises in acknowledgement of their homage to Him.

*Nad*.—Is a musical instrument like a harp. This word was used in V, 7, in the sense of the divine voice within.

*Pari*—in line 3, is here translated as measures (*ragnis*), and *seon* which follows it, means, with. Another rendering of the word *pari* is fairy, and of *seon* like, thus giving the meaning that the songs

are beautiful and fascinating like the songs of Fairies.

4 and 5. *Dharamraja*—Is the judge of the next world, and *Chitguptas* are his two agents recording the actions of men as they are performed.

*Devi*—Is the feminine of *Deva*. The reference is to Parvati, Saraswati and Lakhshmi, the spouses of the Trinity, Shiva, Brahma and Vishnoo, respectively.

*Endowed with beauty*—This applies either to Shiva, Brahma and Devi, or to Devi only, as beauty appertains to the female sex. When applied to the former it would mean the grandeur of them. Devi also stands for Shakti (emblem of divine power).

10. Another version of this line is that the Pandits and sages read and sing the Vedas of different ages, meaning to convey the idea that the Vedas change from age to age.

*Beauties*.—Refer to the *Apasras* of Hinduism, or the *Houries* of Islam. According to another version, these beauties, (as well as the three regions—Upper, Middle and Lower) sing to Him.

12. The reference in this line is to the 14 gems (precious things—*Rattan*) in Hindu mytho-

logy brought up from under the sea through its being churned by the Devas.

13. *Fourfold Creation—Khani chare*, the creations produced from sperm, egg, seed and sweat respectively.

15. Another version of this line is, To Thee sing those who please Thee.

16. Another version is, many more sing to Thee, whom I do not know or whom I do not remember, how can Nanak recount them?

17 to 22. These lines give the real sense of this stanza, which is that God is the greatest of all, the Creator of all and the all-wise Ruler.

18. Another version of this line is, He who creates the creation exists, and shall endure for ever. He shall neither depart nor be made to depart.

20. For like ideas, see XXXVII, 17. Another version is, He watches over His handiwork according to His purpose. See XXXI, 3.

22. *King of Kings*,—That is, Supreme Lord of all. See XXV, 17.

XXVIII.—This stanza opens with a new topic—'Signs and Symbols'—which is continued up to stanza XXXIII. In Guru Nanak's time there existed an order of religious persons called yogis, founded by the sage Gorkh Nath, who claimed to



study and practise yoga, the science of high spiritual culture, and to teach it to those who would be initiated as his disciples. These yogis lived a life of absolute retirement from the world, abandoning all its civic duties and religious rituals.

They had, however, introduced their own forms, symbols and rituals and in their zeal they had given them undue attention and rather exaggerated importance, and so they often forgot the spirit that underlay them originally. In course of time, they had got divided into sects, and they were also not free from the taint of narrow-mindedness, which is a thing that factionism often brings in its train. In these six stanzas, therefore, the Guru, in the exuberance of his liberal spirit, and with the insight and righteousness of a devotee's mind, justly condemns, in his usual admirable manner, this undue emphasis of mere externals and non-essentials, and he teaches the way to be a true yogi, and so to become one with God (*Eḱ-eesh*), vide XXXII, 3.

1. *Contentment .. ear-rings.*— The wearing of ear-rings (*munda*), as a mark of their homage to their Guru, was one of the many practices of the yogis, and it is found to persist to the present day. The yogi is advised to strive for the spiri-

tual contentment (*santokh*), a state of inner fullness, as it were, in which man is "content in the self (*Atma*) alone" as the Bhagwadgita has it (III, 17). He would then be free from any physical, mental or spiritual shortcomings, and there would be no need to signify the fact by his perforated ears.

*Modesty ..... begging pouch.*—The begging pouch (a sort of canvas bag) was the symbol of religious mendicancy of these yogis; in it the yogis gathered the proceeds of their begging as they roamed from door to door for alms. This they did, not only to provide themselves with food, but also to get themselves rid, as it was originally supposed, of a false sense of the worldly odium attaching to begging. Guru Nanak then gives the yogis the new and true standard of practising the virtue of modesty and self-effacement, instead of being merely satisfied with the outer symbols. The word in the text for modesty is the Persian word *Sarm* or *Sharam*. A commentator (Prof. Teja Singh) taking *Sarm* as a Sanskrit word makes it to mean endeavour.

*Ashes of Meditations.*—The yogis besmeared their bodies with ashes (*vibhut*), probably in order to make them cold and heat proof (according to the popular belief), and thus to remain undisturbed by the failings of the body during

meditation. On this point the advice given is that the practice of deep meditation, if correctly and devoutly performed, would of itself lead to the forgetfulness of everything outside, ashes or no ashes.

*Memory of death.....rug.*—The yogis wore a shroud-like garment without regular sleeves and buttons or fastenings, made up of patches of cloth of different colours, as a mark of keeping the memory of death alive and thus remaining unattached to this mortal coil. Here also the advice is given against any inordinate reliance on forms.

*Chaste like a virgin.*—In accordance with the rules (*jugat*) of their order, the yogis entered into no sexual relations. On this point the advice given by Nanak is to lead a chaste life, pure in thought, word and deed. The body would then be as chaste as a virgin. Be it noted that the word for body in the text is *kaya*, which in the Sanskrit language is used in the feminine gender, hence its comparison with a virgin (*kuari* or *kumari*, meaning an unmarried woman who is undoubtedly chaste, *i. e.*, pure).

*Faith.....~ staff.*—The yogis carried a staff (even as kings have a sceptre) as a symbol of their faith in God. On this the advice given

to them is to care more for the substance than for the shadow, and to show their entire dependence on God by their conduct in their daily life.

3. *Universal brotherhood..... Ayee Panth.*—One of the several sects of the yogis was, and is, that known as the *Ayee Panth*, which, though known to be a little more liberal than others, still is a sect with its inevitable narrowness of thought and vision. The members of this sect are reminded that the goal in life is Universal Brotherhood (*Sagal Jamati*) and not sectarianism.

*To Win the mind.*—Finally it is pointed out that this body, or for the matter of that this world, is conquered not by the suppression or repression of desires but by the control from within of the mind. Cf. B. G., II, 59.

4 and 5. *Prostration ( adesh ).*—*Adesh* was the word of salutation among the yogis. It is said by some that it means the Lord of the Beginning, (literally *Adi*, beginning, and *Esh*, Lord), and that it conveyed the idea that the speaker made prostration to God. But in Sanskrit *Adi* and *Esh* combined would be *Adeesh*, whereas the word used here is *Adesh* which in Sanskrit means command and may have been used by the yogis as a salutation to emphasise the fact that God's command should ever be obeyed. How-

ever, having lost its original value, the word became only a form of salutation, merely conveying a compliment to the person addressed. Opportunity is therefore taken by the Guru to remind the yogi that in his form of salutation, prostration is to God alone Who, it is emphasised, exists in the beginning, before the beginning, etc., *vide* comments on the Prologue (Invocation) as to the attributes of God here mentioned.

*Colourless (Anil)*—Is blemishless or holy. See V, 2; XII, 5 and XVI, 24.

To the true devotee's mind, nothing is so abhorrent as sticking to the dull, wooden, soulless forms that do not correspond to the spirit within, and hence the warning given above to the form-ridden yogis, and through them to the world at large, conveyed in the sweet and unoffending but courageous manner so usual with the noble Guru.

These lines form the closing refrain in the three succeeding stanzas.

XXIX.—The subject of the last stanza is continued here.

1. *Knowledge.....food*.—The yogis had a system of their own of taking food together at a common kitchen. They are advised to prepare and take instead, the food of divine knowledge

and also distribute (spread) it to all through compassion for humanity.

*Nada*.—The yogis kept a *nada*, i. e., a musical instrument, presumably as a symbol of divine harmony. For this they are advised to listen to the spiritual music that plays *nada*-like in every human heart.

*Inner music*.—According to mysticism, enchanting music is going on within us all, could we but hear it in utter forgetfulness of the world. It is the divine music, the voice of God Himself that is heard in the stillness of the human heart.

2. *Master*.—The yogis had adopted for themselves the surname of Nath (master) e. g., Gorakh Nath, etc., probably, as an indication of their having attained to masterhood. They are advised by the Guru that God is the only Master who rules over all.

*Riddhis and Siddhis*.—Next the yogis made much of the psychic powers attained by them through the practice of yoga. These are called *Riddhis* and *Siddhis*. The yogis are advised to have no fascination for these, as they interest not the adepts, but only persons of a lower order in yoga. For further reference to such superphysical powers, see comments on VIII, 3.

3. *Union and Disunion*.—The yogis laid

stress on the practices of yoga, which literally means union, implying union with God. They are advised against the undue forcing of evolution. Studying the law of evolution, they should know that men make progress by graduated steps each in conformity with his stage of development. Union with God being as much a fact in nature as disunion, or the separation from Him, it is pointed out that both union and disunion are decreed by God for man according to his merits. One need not, therefore, be impatient in these matters. *Sanjog* and *Vyoga*, rendered as union and disunion, are translated by some as gain and loss, respectively, making the line to mean that man's all affairs, physical, mental, moral and spiritual, lie in the hands of God.

XXX.—This stanza speaks of the Hindu Trinity, in order to bring out the importance of the appropriate respect to be paid to the three beings representing the same. Trinity, not understood in the light of unity, has led to sectarianism in religion, thus for example, the followers of one member of the Trinity, say Shiva, are at daggers drawn with the followers of another, e.g., Vishnoo, and so on.

1. *The one Mother*—Is either God in His feminine aspect to suit the simile in hand, or

*Maya*, which, again, in the Sanskrit language is in the feminine gender. *Maya* (vide comments on XXI, 7 and 8) is either God's creative power, which is not distinct from Him, or *Prakṛiti* (matter), by means of which God creates. Here again there is a passing reference to the Hindu theory of creation, the same as in XVI, 19 and XXI, 7.

*The disciples*,—That is, the members of the Trinity as given in the succeeding line, who are referred to as disciples of God, to bring out the fact of their utter dependence on Him and also perhaps, by way of a pointed reference to the practice of the yogis, of making disciples.

2. The reference here is to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, respectively.

3 and 4. God as Brahman the Absolute is the Creator, and the Ruler of *Devas* and of all. Compare B. G. VII, 26 to 27 and IX, 10.

5 and 6. See comments on XXVIII, 4 and 5.

XXXI.—The subject of Formalism and Sectarianism is continued. The word seat (*asan*) at the beginning of this stanza is possibly suggested by the various seats (postures) resorted to in the yoga practices.

1. *Seat*.—In religion, God is sometimes imagined as occupying a seat in space, e.g., *Baikuntha*, in Hinduism, *Arsha* in Islam, or Heaven in Chris-



tianity. The Japji speaks of God's seat as being everywhere.

2. God is not only omnipresent, as said above, but He is also omniscient; hence He manages everything to perfection; He need not revise His arrangements.

3. He not only creates, but He also maintains. The idea is akin to that in XXII, 20 and XXXVII, 17.

XXXII.—Having spoken of the evils of formalism and sectarianism, the real truth is once again emphasised, to wit, that salvation lies not only in the worship of God but also in divine Grace.

1 and 2. *Repeat the Name of God.*—These lines emphasise the importance of the repetition of God's name as a mode of worship.

3. *Path to the bridegroom.*—This is the Path to God, who is likened to a bridegroom to whom the bride, the human soul, goes with gladness. *Pat* in Sanskrit means *bridegroom* as well as *honour*, (in which latter sense it is used in XIX, 2). Hence another version of this line is, on this path, let one set one's foot with *honour*, etc.

*Stairs.*—This points to the fact that there are different stages on the Path, as also to the figurative idea of God living on high, to reach whom

a ladder may be needed. Each stanza of the Japji is called a *pavri* (stair), probably with reference to this metaphor of the ladder and the Path.

*Become one with God.*—*Ekeesh* (*Ek*, one and *Esh*, God). Compare *Brahman* bhuta (Becoming Brahman or God), in B.G., V, 24 ; VI, 27 ; XIV, 26 and XVIII, 53.

4 and 5. *Grace.*—The idea is that every one, however low his development in spirituality, desires to approach God as he learns from Books and by other means, of divine bliss ; yet the greatest secret of the path is that unless God blesses human efforts with success, nothing can be achieved. This doctrine of divine Grace is an essential feature of the Japji, which has already been referred to more than once. See comments on IV, 6. Also XXXIV, 9 ; XXXVII, 12 and XXXVIII, 6 and 7.

*Nazri*—In the text (from the Persian word *Nazar*, literally, sight) means, by the Grace of God.

6. *All false ; all vanity.*—That is to say, the ways to spiritual upliftment which do not take into account divine Grace are false and not to be depended upon ; they may at best be merely far-fetched. Compare B. G., XI, 48.

XXXIII.—Here the subject of Formalism and Sectarianism is brought to a close. This stanza

further amplifies the idea of divine Grace, mentioned in the closing lines of the last stanza. It is pointed out that man unaided by God's Grace cannot, by the mere force of his own efforts, succeed in anything, such as speaking or keeping silence, asking for or giving alms, living or dying, acquiring kingdoms or wealth, attaining worldly or spiritual knowledge, let alone achieving salvation, the goal of existence.

7. This line speaks of the almighty powers of God, in contrast to the limited powers of man.

8. *None is high or low.* — This may have various meanings, viz. :—

- (a) Every body, whether high or low, is equally powerless before God.
- (b) No one is inherently high or low. Compare II, 4, where it is said that by God's command men become high and low, suggesting the idea that it is only human actions combined with divine Grace that make men high or low, and not their birth or any such thing.
- (c) God is partial to none and treats all equally, whether, high or low. This is implied in the attribute of being devoid of hatred, ascribed to God in the Pro-

logue (Invocation). Compare Bhagwad-gita, IX, 29 : "The same is He to all."

(d) No one can of himself (*i. e.*, without God's help or Grace) be high or low.

XXXIV.—A new subject is taken up from here, and is continued up to stanza XXXVIII, namely, the state of high religious consciousness called in Hinduism *jnana* (Divine wisdom or knowledge) resulting in *Mokhsha* (salvation). Such a state has already been touched upon in stanzas VIII to XVI, but the description of it here is more detailed, and has a meaning and charm of its own. Before, however, attempting to describe the true *jnana* state, a description of the preliminary condition of the initiate is necessary. Stanza XXXIV does this. The aspirant on the Path, it says, must first right himself, before he takes upon himself, the harder task of righting others. He is therefore at first wholly and solely engaged in the task of his own self-culture by means of various disciplines, on the principle of we reap as we sow, as was said in XX, 9. This stage of the Path is called that of *dharma* (law), as opposed to that of *jnana* (knowledge), the latter being dealt with in the next stanza.

1 to 5. *God made the nights and the days, etc.*—In these lines, the creation of the world by God

is described in beautiful imagery. Nights, days, lunar days and seasons represent time, space, air, fire, etc. The two fundamental ideas of space and time, combined with the elements of air, fire, water and earth, make for us this world. Another fundamental notion is that of causation which is dealt with in the following lines (6 to 11).

*Lunar Days*—Are days reckoned according to the movements of the moon, and have their own significance. Hindus keep fasts and take baths at places of pilgrimage on specified days of the bright and dark fortnights. Muhamedans have lunar months instead of solar.

*Earth . . . . . temple*.—The word in the text for temple is *dharmsala*, literally, a place of *dharma*—a significant word standing for law, righteousness, etc. Popularly, a *dharmsala* is a public place of rest for travellers. This world, therefore, is a temple in more senses than one. It is a sanctuary for the practice of virtue (*dharma*) ; it is a world of causes and effects for the reward of actions done in the past and for the performance of new actions ; and lastly it is a halting place, like a *Serai* or inn, on which no heart should be set, because of the shortness of the stay in it.

*Lives of multijarious kinds and colours*.—Lives

here mean living creatures. Compare II, 3 ; III, 5 and 6, and XVI, 13 and 14.

6. See IV, 6 ; VI, 2 ; XX, 2 and Shloka, 4.

7. See IV, 1 and XXVII, 17.

8. See XVI, 1 and XXVII, 6.

9. See XXVI, 7 and comments on IV, 6.

10 and 11. These lines point to the law of *Karma* spoken of in line 6 above.

*Good and bad deeds*—Are called *kach pakai*, literally, unripe and ripe.

*There*,—i. e., in the life to come, or in His court, as mentioned in line 7 above.

XXXV.—Having spoken of the first step in *jnana*, the Guru now describes the *jnana* state proper. It is the state of high divine consciousness, of complete self-realization. In this state one has the vision of the infinite number of universes and the glorious spiritual regions that exist. Arjuna had such a vision, when granted divine eyes (*Dibb Chakshu*), vide B. G., Chapter XI.

1. *Region of Law*.—Stands for *Dharm Khand*, a state in which one reaps the fruit of his actions according to the Law of *Karma*. This has already been dealt with in the last stanza.

2. *Region of Divine Knowledge*.—Stands for *jnana khand*. When a man is perfected by the performance of right actions, he rises above

*Karma*, and, gifted with divine knowledge he is said to enter the *jnana khand* ( region of divine knowledge). That region is to be described in this stanza. There is, however, one other state, known in Hinduism as the *bhakti khand* or *bhakti marga* ( Region, or Path, of Devotion ), which though not different from the *jnana* state in its fruits and results, is yet distinguished from it in the method pursued. The Japji, according to which the method *par excellence* is that of *bhakti*, never speaks of *jnana* and *bhakti* separately, but ever takes them both as one.

3 and 4. *Winds, waters and fires*.—Here represent space. See XXVII, 4 and XXXIV, 2.

*Krishnas*—Refer to *Shri Krishna* (the Incarnation of Vishnu). He is called by many names, *Kahan* here and *Govinda* in XXVI, 14.

5. *Worlds of action*.—This earth of ours is called a world of action ( *Karma Bhumi* ), as actions are done here whose effects cling to men until they have been fully exhausted.

*Merus*.—Meru is the *Sumer Parbat* of gold, the highest summit of the Himalayas where, says tradition, the Japji was taught to the *Siddhas* (adepts). See Introduction p. 8.

*Dhruvas and Sermons*.—Dhruva (*Dhu* in the text) was a devotee who, in his youth, being

offended at the unkindly treatment of his step-mother, left the palace of his royal father for the forest, where he worshipped God intensely. In acceptance of his worship, says tradition, he was gifted with perpetual youth, to remain fixed as the pole star, which is for that reason worshipped by many devout persons. In the course of his devotion, Dhruva is said to have received instruction (sermons) from the wandering sage Narada. So it is said in the Japji that in the universes, there have been many Dhruvas and sermons.

7. *Siddhas*—Are adepts in spiritual knowledge.

*Counterparts*.—The word in the text is *Ves*, which has been variously rendered, such as counterfeits, or representations. The meaning possibly is that the *Devis* appear to their devotees in different garbs or characters on different occasions. Or perhaps the reference is, as Prof. Teja Singh thinks, to those virgins who are supposed to be inspired by Durga Devi and are worshipped as such.

*Naths*.—See XXIX, 2.

8. *Deva and Danav*.—See XXVI, 17.

*Munis*.—Sages.

*Gems and Seas*.—See XXVII, 12.

9. *Sources of creation*.—See XXVII, 13.



*Languages.*—The word in the text is *Bani*, which may also mean any holy text, such as the Vedas, etc. See XIX, 6.

*Kings.*—The word in the text is the Persian word, *pat* (abbreviation of *Padshah*). It may also mean a foot-man (if the Sanskrit word, *Pat*—foot be adopted).

*Rulers.*—The word in the text is *Narinda* (Indra of people). For Indra, see comments on IX, 1.

10. *Inspired beings.*—The word in the text is *Surtin*. It is used in the sense of inner knowledge in XIII, 1; XXXIII, 5 and XXXVI, 7. It may also be taken here to mean revealed knowledge (*Shruti*).

XXXVI. —The subject of *jnana* is continued, with special reference to the Bliss and Wisdom that one finds on attaining *jnana*.

1. *Region of divine knowledge (jnana khanda).*— See comments on XXXV, 1 and 2.

*Wisdom Predominates,*—i. e., one becomes a seer and a knower. Thus says the Bhagwadgita :

To a man of knowledge, "there remains nothing to be known ; his delusion is at an end" (VII, 2).

He " sees all in the self and the Self in all " (IV, 35).

He "is a seer of the essence of things" (IV, 34).

2. *Krores of Joys*.—There is complete happiness. "Having obtained wisdom, one swiftly goes to the supreme bliss" (B. G., IV, 39 ; see also Japji, XXVII, 2).

3. *Realm of Happiness (sarm khand)*.—This is none other than the Region of divine knowledge spoken of above. The realm of happiness may be taken as that which is generally called *bhakti khand*, which is the same thing as *bhakti yoga*, and is characterised by the utmost bliss ; but as mentioned in the comments on lines 1 and 2 of the last stanza, the Japji does not treat *jnana* and *bhakti*, as distinct. It rather combines the two, for the practical effect of both is the same, the fact being that a person perfected in *jnana* should have in him the fountain-spring of the joy and ecstasy of the *bhakti*. Similarly, must one, who has found the goal along the Path of devotion (*bhakti*), possess the gift of that insight into truth that marks a *jnani* (man of knowledge). In the Bhagwadgita too *jnana* and *bhakti* are beautifully combined : "Dear is the *jnani* to Me, absorbed as he is in My *bhakti*" (VII, 17).

*Sarm* in the term *sarm khand* (Realm of happiness) means happiness, being the Sanskrit

*Sharman*, while the Persian *sharam* means modesty, as it was in XXVIII. According to another version, *Sarm* like the Sanskrit *Presharm*, means exertion; the meaning thus given to the line being: "In the next stage—that of self-exertion—the development of character expresses itself in the formation of disposition" (Prof. Tejasingh). This rendering would appear to be rather too free.

4. This line speaks of the forms of exquisite beauty to be found in the Realm of Happiness. As to the close connection that exists between beauty and pleasure, a quotation from John Ruskin, a great modern lover of beauty, may prove interesting: "Any material object, which can give us pleasure in the simple contemplation of its outward qualities without any direct and definite exertion of the intellect, I call in some way and in some degree beautiful. Whatever is pleasurable, therefore, is also beautiful. As to why we receive pleasure from certain forms and colours and not from others, is due to the ultimate instinct and principles of human nature for which no other reason can be adduced than simply the will of the Deity that we should be so created." Of course culture has its part to play, and it is so given to man that "by constantly

obeying the natural laws of like and dislike, he can derive pleasure always from that which God originally intended should give him pleasure," and that by constantly disobeying them, he can deprive himself of deriving pleasure from that, or even to get attracted to that which will harm him. Culture would therefore lie in our getting reinforced with "the faculty of receiving the greatest possible pleasure from those material sources which are attractive to our moral nature in its purity and perfection."

8. *Siddhas*.—See XXXV, 7.

XXXVII.—The subject of *Jnana* is continued here, with special reference to service of mankind. The *jnani* (man of knowledge) is not only an enlightened person, he is also a man of action, the hero, the warrior, the leader, the teacher (Guru), living only for others.

1 and 2. *Sphere of action*.—The action mentioned here as *Karam Khand* should not be confused with the action mentioned as *Dharam Khand* in XXXV, 1, and dwelt upon in XXXIV. The latter is action in which the doer is anxious for rewards and results, while in the action mentioned here, the doer is unconcerned with rewards and results, doing action for the sake of action only and as a matter of duty; it is disinterested, un-

attached action, the *Karam Yoga* of the Bhagwad-gita (B. G., II, 47 and 48, and III, 7 to 20). Rightly is it said here, therefore, that the characteristic of this kind of action (*Karam Khand*) is Power, *i. e.*, by doing action in this way, men wield very great power; whereas the selfish action in which one expects rewards and results, be they *swarga* (Heaven) or worldly goods, does undoubtedly bind people and make them imbecile.

*Mighty heroes . . . . steeped in Rama dwell there.*—Persons who perform actions as taught here, possess very great power and play the hero, in that they are always absorbed in God (Rama), *i. e.*, they care for Him alone.

*Rama* (literally, All-pervading) stands for the Deity who incarnated as the son of king Dasratha of Ajudhia. He fought a great war with the mighty and cruel Ravana, king of Lanka, and conquering him, he relieved the world of his great oppression. Thus Rama's devotees, following his lead, will always do their part in life in the service of humanity.

5. *Sita*,—Was the spouse of Rama. She is extolled here for her devotion to Rama. Note the pun on the word *Sita*, which, as a verb, means sewn. She may thus be said to be “sewn into glory,” meaning that she is steeped in glory, or is

made glorious. The sense of the passage is that in this sphere of action, heroes like Rama are found as well as heroines like Sita.

6. *Beauty (Rup)*,—Should be taken in the physical as well as the moral and spiritual sense.

7 and 8. *Will neither be cheated*,—That is, they will not be deprived unjustly of the fruits of their good works, as is also said in the Bhagwadgita, that on this Path there is no loss of efforts. (II, 39). It may also mean that they will no more fall into temptation.

*Nor will they die*,—That is, they will be immortal, or deathless.

9 and 10. These lines further stress the idea contained in lines 3 to 5 above.

*Worlds of His devotees, etc.*—Means that there are many devotees of God who have reached the state of enlightenment (*jnana*).

11 and 12. *Realm of truth (Sach Khand)*—Is the same as Region of Divine Knowledge (*jnana khand*) in XXXV, 2 and XXXVI, 1, Realm of Happiness (*Sarm Khand*) in XXXVI, 3, and Sphere of Action (*Karm Khand*) in XXXVII, 1.

*Formless One (Nirankar)*,—That is, God the Absolute, who is said to live in the Realm of Truth. This is another way of saying that God

is Truth, as has been said so many times already. See Prologue, VI, 1, XXVII, 17 and XXXIV.

13 to 15. The idea here is common with that in XXIV, 5 and 6, XXVII, 14 and XXXV, 6 and 10.

16. The idea here is common with that in XIX, 9 and XXI, 17.

17. *He sees His Creation.*—For a like idea see XXVII, 20. The sense is that God is happy at seeing His creation working according to His will and command. Another version is, man looks on all this and rejoices.

18. The idea pervading the Japji is that God cannot be described. See III, 9, XII, 2, XXVI, 25, XXXVI, 5 and 6, and line 14 of this stanza. The literal rendering of this line would be—to describe Him is as hard as steel.

XXXVIII.—This stanza sets forth a course of discipline according to which man should try to realise the *jnana* state, so beautifully described in the last three stanzas. This course of discipline is given by means of what may be called the Simile of the Mint. Just as a coin is produced at the mint, so Truth is to be forged (that is, discovered) at the factory of spiritual discipline.

1. *Continnence (Jat).*—The first requisite of spiritual discipline is Continnence or Chastity, even as

the first step in the making of a mint would be the raising of a suitable edifice, herein called the furnace, for the purpose of carrying on of the minting operations. Thus we learn that man's body, including all his senses and desires, should be the first thing to be brought under control. In Hinduism great stress is laid on this virtue, generally known as *Brahmcharya*. The Bhagwadgita, in laying down the specific means of attainment (VI, 10 to 32), mentions the vow of *Brahmcharya* as one of these means (VI, 14). In V, 27 and 28, while summarising such means, the Bhagwadgita stresses *Brahmcharya* in the more general words, "Control of senses, mind and reason," and strikingly enough, it makes use of the very word *Yat* or *Jat* used here to convey the same idea.

*Patience (Dhiraj).*—This is the second requisite, and it is likened to the goldsmith or the operator at the mint. It goes without saying what a great part this virtue, including as it does, perseverance, firmness, etc., plays in the success of any great operation. The Bhagwadgita, in VI, 25, expresses the idea by the word *Dhriti* (steadiness), which is not different etymologically from the word *Dhiraj* used here. The need for this rare quality is no less important to the spiritually sick, trying to shake off their mental ailment, than it is to those



suffering from bodily sickness, appropriately called patients.

2. *Pure reason (Buddhi)*.—This is the third requisite. It is not the ordinary worldly or lower mental reason or *buddhi*. It is rather the higher mind or *Vaivasay Atmak Buddhi*, the determinate reason, spoken of in II, 43 and 49 ; IX, 30 ; X, 36 and XVIII, 30 of the Bhagwadgita and its possession is essential for spiritual progress. It is described as *matman* (understanding) in XXVI, 7, and as *buddh* (wisdom) in XIII, 1 and XXXVI, 7, and is *surat* (inner knowledge) in XIII, 1 ; XXXIII, 5, and XXXVI, 7. It may be called the spiritual sense or the intuitive faculty, *i. e.*, that which develops with the growth in spirituality. Such an important quality as this is rightly likened to the anvil of the goldsmith, so essential to him in practically all his operations.

*Vedas* -- Are the holy books of the Hindus (See comments on V, 7). This is the fourth requisite. Broadly speaking, it should be taken to include the eternal verities, the fundamental truths and the universal principles, such as are given in all the scriptures of the world, containing the accumulated wisdom and experience of the ages. Thus says the Bhagwadgita, "Let the Shastras (Hindu scriptures)

be thy authority in determining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Knowing what has been declared by the ordinances of the scriptures, thou oughtest to work in the world" (XVII, 24). Who could deny that, armed with such wisdom, man will surely reach his goal? The text rightly likens the Vedas to the hammer and other such implements used by the operator at the mint.

3. *Fear of God (Bhow)*.—This is the fifth requisite. Fearlessness is the one great virtue that religion teaches (see IV, 10 and XVI, 1). But how can man become fearless without first surrendering himself to the One who is Fearlessness itself? "Come to Me only and thou shalt be saved, sorrow not," is said in XVIII, 66 of the B. G. Fear of God is another term for faith in Him; and rightly is this quality likened to the bellows of the operator, which are used for kindling and blowing up the fire so as to intensify its heat.

*Penance (Taptao)*.—This is the sixth requisite, for remarks on which, see comments on I, 2. Penance is certainly the fire of spirituality, even as the physical fire is the thing that is responsible for setting the whole machinery moving at the mint.

4. *Love of God (Bhao)*.—This is the seventh

and last requisite. Worship of God in Love, forms the cornerstone of the Japji, and it is described at length in I to VII. Love of God is in the simile, the melting-pot or the crucible into which is to be poured the nectar (*amrit*), as is the coining substance for being moulded.

Nectar (*amrit*).—As a result of man's love for God, or communion with Him, man becomes immortal; is "not hurt by death" (VIII, 4); "is not hurt in the face" (XIII, 3); "goes not to death" (XIII, 4); "will neither be cheated nor will he die" (XXXVII, 7); "will finish his task, and save many others along with him" (Shloka, 5 and 6); "will be one with God" (XXXII, 3); "drinks the nectar of immortality" (B. G., XIV, 20).

5. *Holy word (Shabd)*.—This is God's Holy Name, mentioned as the True Name (*Sat Nam*) in the Prologue (Invocation). Man, having become immortal, is merged into his Source, God, who alone abideth. This is what the Mint of Truth coins—God's Holy Name, the one and only great Truth.

6 and 7. Man's efforts, it is said, are crowned with success only when they are supplemented by the grace of God. This, as pointed out before, is the basic idea in the Japji. See comments

under *Parsad* in the Prologue, and also IV, 6, XXIV, 16; XXXII, 5 and XXXIV, 9. Compare also Bhagwadgita XVIII, 56 and 62.

*Epilogue—Shloka.* The Japji proper ends with the preceding stanza. This shloka is added as an epilogue and it gives an excellent finishing touch to the theme of the poem. It is said that God, having created man, has in His mercy endowed him with ample opportunity to reach his destined goal by means of his good actions. By making proper efforts, man saves not only himself but also others.

1. *Air is the Guru.*—Out of the five elements of ether (space,) air, water, fire and earth that enter into the physical composition of man, the microcosm, as well as that of the universe, the macrocosm, air, water and earth are specifically mentioned here. Ether, or space, is possibly included in the term air, both being more or less equally subtle and invisible to the physical eye. The omission of fire is possibly due to poetical needs, and it should also be taken to be included along with the others. Evidently the point made here is that the whole nature contributes to the growth of man, physical and spiritual, from his very infancy. The way in which this comes about is explained by way of an illustration. Water and

earth are likened to the father and mother, respectively, in relation to the child, as representing the male and the female germ-cells in him. Air, as representing the breath of life, is likened to the Guru, who may be either God who, as Carlyle says, "breathes the sacred celestial life-essence into man," or he may be the spiritual preceptor who breathes spiritual instruction into man.

2. *Day and Night are the two nurses.*—Day and night, here likened to the two nurses, male and female, who play so great a part in the fostering and the upbringing of the growing child, represent time, in which man lives and works out his evolution. It is by time that man receives all his opportunities of growth, physical, mental and spiritual.

3 and 4. *Good and bad action etc.*—Man is entirely responsible for his actions, according to which he gets his meed.

*Dharmaraja.*—As was stated in XXVII, 5, Dharmaraja judges the actions of men which his messengers the *Chittgupats* record as they are performed. The Judge of judges is indeed Almighty God, under Whose command His whole creation, including the hierarchy, works out His Will (XXX, 1 to 3). Again God bestows all benefits attributed to the *devas*, and "under God

nature gives birth to the whole creation, movable and immovable, and because of Him the universe revolves" (B. G., VII, 22 and IX, 10). The idea of human responsibility for actions is constant in the Japji. See IV, 6 ; VI, 2 ; XX, 7 to 9, XXI, 6 and XXXIV, 6 and 10.

*Some are near and some far,*—That is to say, far and near in relation to God according to their actions. The idea seems to be akin to that in XX, 7 to 9, where it is said that the qualities of "virtuous" or "vicious" are not acquired by mere assertion; on the contrary, all depends upon actions, for as one sows, so one reaps. Compare XXXIII, 8, where it is said, "None is high or low." Other versions are—

(a) Some get the reward of their actions soon, (that is, in this world), others get it late (*i. e.*, after death). It is said in the Bhagwadgita that those who worship the Devas attain success in this world quickly, while those who worship God are united to Him in the life to come. (IV, 10 to 12).

(b) Some consider God near, and some far.—The reference may be to the controversial doctrines of philosophy, according to which God is considered either as Immanent or as Transcendental. Compare III, 7 and 8.

Another possible meaning is that some find God within themselves, while others consider that He is to be found in the clouds or dwelling in His far-away heaven.

5. *Those who meditate on His name, etc.*—The point insisted upon here is that under the opportunities so mercifully endowed on man by his Creator, man should satisfy his inner spiritual urge by devoting himself wholly and solely to worshipping Him, and thus accomplish the purpose of his life.

6. *Their looks are bright, etc.*—After accomplishing his purpose, man naturally looks cheerful and happy, for not only is he saved himself, but he is also gifted with the power of saving others. He can save others in various ways, for instance, by contact and association, by his teaching, preaching and generally acting for the good of humanity, and by leaving his mark on the sands of time for the guidance of many generations to come. This is evidenced by the lives of many saints, sages and prophets of the past, and the world's only hope ever lies in such master-souls. All peace to them. All homage to them.

## **DISCOURSES\* ON THE BHAGWADGITA**

\* Some of these appeared as Magazine Articles in 1928-29 in the Kalpaka (Tinnevely S. I.). They are reproduced here in a revised and improved form.



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# GURUISM \*

## I. The Need for a Guru

Mysticism has always stressed the need for a Guru or spiritual preceptor for spiritual instruction and guidance. And we find in the Bhagwadgita that, in the case of Arjuna, instruction in the eternal verities and the inner truth of things does not begin, until he, overwhelmed with grief by the complexity of the problems of life, places himself in all humility at the feet of his Master like a true and earnest seeker after truth, and prays :— "My heart is weighed down with the vice of faintness, my mind is confused as to duty (*dharma*). I am Thy disciple, suppliant to Thee, teach me (B. G., II, 7)." The Lord Shri Krishna, as He graciously responds to the fervent prayer of His disciple, first of all points out the rudimentary fact that the truth regarding the real and the unreal is perceived only by the seers of the essence of things, who alone are able to give instruction in wisdom (*jnana*) (B. G., II, 14 and IV, 34). The seer referred to here is none other than he who is generally known as the Guru. The Bhagwadgita further enjoins the worship of the Guru as a form

\* This is also separately available as a pamphlet,

of righteous austerity for the purpose of spiritual culture (XVII, 14.)

What is wanted, therefore, is that for any advancement in the spiritual life, you must find a true Guru who himself knows and is possessed of the necessary power and capacity to teach and to guide, for can the blind lead the blind, and can a fire be kindled except from a spark of fire ? There is in fact no royal road to divine knowledge, nor has the path to Divinity been strewn with roses. On the contrary, the path has well been likened to the sharp edge of a razor, which is so difficult and dangerous that it is deemed impossible to tread it without the constant help and guidance of one who has himself already trodden it. Hence the most ancient and sacred institution, what we may call Guruism, an institution which has ever been regarded by mysticism as its greatest pillar, and which has, by the efflux of time, grown deep into our social polity; • so much so that it has ever been a matter of reproach for an aspirant to be without a Guru. It is said of the saint Kabir that his persecutors, in order to humble or defame him, resorted to the expedient of spreading the scandal about him that he was *Nigura* (without a Guru) knowing that the word, in the common estimation, con-

noted a blasphemous person with dubious moral character, possessing no spiritual worth at all.

For reasons into which we need not enter here, however, there has, in recent times, been a revulsion of feeling in this respect. Indeed it is now sometimes considered a mark of mental degeneracy to own a Guru at all. In secular matters, of course, the need for a Guru (teacher) goes without question, though here also there has lately been a great falling off from that high standard of reverence that in olden times marked the attitude of the learner towards his teacher. It seems astonishing that in these enlightened twentieth century days, a spiritual teacher should be considered unnecessary when in secular matters, which are far less important, a teacher is manifestly necessary.

## II. Requisites of Discipleship

What links the disciple to his spiritual preceptor? It is the unbounded reverence, the unswerving faith, the intense feeling of devotion, and the self-sacrificing spirit of service on the part of the aspirant towards the one who imparts the knowledge of knowledge, on acquiring which nothing remains to be known. The seekers after such knowledge were but few even in the very

glorious times of the past, while in our present day, the hunger for such "abstruse and obscure knowledge," as it is now contemptuously called, seems to have largely, if not wholly, vanished. The world is always lucre-ridden, and the rule of wisdom has been that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. *Ahamkāra*, love of self is the one great obstacle on the path, and therefore, the Guru, before initiating the seeker into the mysteries of a greater life, or even before he would attempt to teach him a single word, would require on the part of the disciple an attitude of mind that appreciates the need for the negation of this self. "Thou art full of thyself," said a sage, "so thou hast to go empty." According to the Bhagwadgita, the Guru has to be approached by the disciple falling at his feet (*Paren paten*) by questioning (*Pra prashnen*), and by doing him all sorts of personal service (*Sewia*). (B. G., IV, 34). These are the three essential requisites of discipleship without which nothing can be attained. The falling at the Guru's feet is not the mere outward bodily obeisance, so apparent to the view and so easy to render, but the far greater and deeper inner reverence born of the intense and never-failing faith in him.

Faith such as this is based on experience and is progressive indeed. It grows with the spiritual growth of the disciple, the more he knows the Guru, the more he trusts him, and the more he sees of him, the more he loves him and surrenders himself to him. And in this wise the aspirant eventually attains the goal of his life's journey.

### III. A Historical Sketch

Let us now consider the historical aspect of the question. In the hoary past in India they devised a social polity, according to which society was divided into compartments (*Varnas*), one of which was that of Brahmans. These Brahmans were very great scholars, masters of the Arts and Sciences, guardians of culture and civilization, and above all the knowers of Brahman or God, an essential quality that gave them their name. While they imparted secular education and presided at religious rites and ceremonials, they also taught *Brahman Vidya* (Divine Wisdom). They were the all-round Gurus of the day, teaching both the secular and the spiritual. They lived the family life which was simple and frugal—a life of plain-living and high-thinking, in contrast to our modern life of high-living and plain-thinking—if thinking at all. In fact they were the

living models of spiritual life as it ought to be lived from day to day in the midst of the worldly concerns and turmoils. Rightly were they called the *Dharama-Avtaras*, the incarnations of *Dharama* (Righteousness). As a summing up of their great qualities, it is stated that *shama* (highest degree of thought-control and mental equipoise), *dama* (self-restraint), austerity, purity, inner cheerfulness, wisdom and learning were the main characteristics that distinguished them from others (B. G., XVIII, 42). Naturally they enjoyed the devotion and loyalty of the laity for whom they lived, not for any purpose of self-aggrandisement or self-indulgence, but in order to be the better able to perform the onerous duties and responsibilities entrusted to them. Needless acrimonious debates are held these days as to whether in their day the *Varnas* of old were in the nature of hereditary and hide-bound castes, which they are to-day. The fact is that all works well so long as man is worth his salt, while all becomes a mockery and a farce as soon as the spirit is fled and gone out of the forms, that is, when the form is no longer a fit residence for the spirit, in which case only the lifeless form remains. This is what has happened to Brahmanism; this is how it fell from its high pedestal.

The Rishi seems to be another person of olden times who imparted spiritual knowledge. He was rather a recluse who, having passed through the first two periods of life in pursuance of the Hindu *Ashrama* System, lived in a lonely forest retreat, engaged in reflecting on and brooding over the secrets of life, and writing as a result of his spiritual researches, for the benefit of the world at large, what have been called the Forest Books (*Aranykas*). Many were the eager disciples that clung to him, tendering him utmost allegiance and steadfast devotion to learn from him the secret holy teachings, the Upanishads (from *Up*, near and *nishad*, to sit), that which could only be imparted in the language of the soul by means of holy contact.

Speaking of the *Sthit Prajna* (stable-minded) and *Gunatita* (one who has crossed the three *gunas* or the worldly delusion), the Bhagwadgita gives a beautiful description of the lofty life lived by such persons, (B. G., II, 54 to 72 and XIV, 21 to 27), shewing how they speak, sit and move, and what are the marks by which they can be recognised.

Such persons are, says the Bhagwadgita, free from all the desires of the heart; satisfied in their inner self; above the plea-



asures and pains of the world ; loosed from passion, fear and anger ; they sit ever happy in God alone, unaffected by the allurements of sense-objects, though living and moving among them ; they are unshaken by the qualities (*gunas*), look equally on gold or stone, on friend or foe ; remain the same in honour and ignominy, serving in devotion God alone, etc., etc. Who can grudge paying the utmost homage from the depth of his soul to such noble persons as these of exemplary life and character, who give the necessary guidance in probing into the secrets of life ? These, then, were another set of Gurus or spiritual preceptors in ancient times.

There is also mention in the Shastras of persons who, though they belonged to the order of kings and carried on duties of kingship, were yet endowed with the wisdom of the sages and failed not in imparting instruction to those who duly approached them for that purpose. Janaka was one of these king-sages (*Raj Rishis*), from whom Sukhdev, a celibate, a born sage, the son of the well-known Vyasa, received instruction. The story is that Sukhdev, though highly learned in the scriptures and all other knowledge of the phenomenal world, felt the shame of his failure thoroughly to grasp the underlying truth of all,

and on the advice of his father he went to Janaka's palace, where, though he was hospitably received, he had to wait for days and days and wander from gate to gate (for a test of his sincerity perhaps), until at last he was ushered into the presence of the king himself and got what he wanted as a consummation to his own vast knowledge and wisdom.

There is yet another method of teaching, which is very well known. It is often quoted in the very pregnant and eloquent words of the Bhagwadgita. "Whenever there is decline of *Dharma* and exaltation of *Adharma*, I Myself come forth for the protection of the good, and for the destruction of the wicked. For the sake of firmly establishing *Dharma* I am born from age to age." (B. G., IV, 7 and 8).

This refers to God Himself coming down on earth to teach, to guide and to protect mankind. The process of it has been called the Divine Incarnation (*Avatar*, literally, to descend). It has been variously interpreted in different systems of thought and religion. To reconcile a difficulty of the mind which can only think within certain obvious limitations due to its own structure, some, while admitting the need for special divine interference in order to adjust mundane affairs, would

be prepared to concede only to this extent that He, the Mighty, All-pervading, far from incarnating Himself, does only send His prophets, messengers (or His only son to bear the cross), or, as another set of people would say, He sends a man amongst men called the hero or leader of his time to do the needful at a particular psychological moment of human need. Take it as you will, it cannot be denied that God remains ever engaged in His work of the preservation of the universe, otherwise the world would fall into ruin (B. G. III, 23 and 24); yet the normal manifestations of Divinity are more emphatically needed when the world order grows disproportionately evil. As to the *Avatar* idea (God taking on the human shape), all depends upon our metaphysical notions. If it is the human destiny to reveal God within, as is indicated in the Bhagwadgita, by such terms as *Brahman Bhuta* (becoming one with God) (V, 24, and VI, 27 and 28), it becomes immaterial whether God manifests Himself in the form of man, or whether man rises to God. It is undoubtedly a historic fact that the Super-souls, having transcended human imperfection, have been monuments of perfection and inspiring examples to struggling humanity at critical junctures in its onward march. From

them man has ever taken courage and tried to grow into full stature of spiritual manhood. Thus the Hindu *Avatar* idea is worthy of serious consideration. When God thus inculcates the teachings, He is the Guru on earth; and what is the effect of such teachings? "Destroyed is my delusion," cries the disciple, "I have gained knowledge through Thy Grace, I am firm, my doubts have fled away. I will do according to Thy word." (B. G., XVIII, 73).

Then we have Mahatmas, saints and sages, the denizens of other worlds than our own, of various gradations of spirituality, coming down of their own free choice from time to time on this planet of ours as human beings to teach mankind and to lead them to their destined goal.

#### IV. Method of Teaching

How is the teaching imparted by the Guru? By word of mouth? Yes, but not by that alone. There are other ways too numerous to mention, in which the Guru would fulfil his purpose or mission according to the exigency of the moment or the need of his disciples. There are, however, people who say that the Guru is no different from the ordinary secular teacher, in that he simply teaches in the known and popular ways and that

his services can be dispensed with, when the pupil has attained to a certain standard, beyond which he may be expected to proceed by himself. But evidently this is not in consonance with facts, for we know things are different in the matter of spiritual teachings. In these, the Guru's function is so peculiar and so much out of the ordinary, that it would seem hard to illustrate it in the light of anything on the material plane. The Guru is concerned with the knowledge of the soul or self, which by virtue of having a value or importance of its own, has been called the kingly-science (*Raj Vidya*) and the kingly-secret (*Raj Guhyam*), into the unfathomable mysteries of which the adept in the science or secret initiates his disciple, and then guides, guards, and watches him in all his masterful and loving ways, until the time when the disciple, through a long and strenuous course of discipline and spiritual exercises, achieves the object so dear to his heart. The Shastras emphasise the fact that this rare stage of final consummation, is realised not by profound and extensive studies and great learning, nor by huge sacrifices (*yajnas*), nor by great charities and severe austerities, but by the loving grace of the all-knowing and all-loving Master in whose care and charge the

disciple has placed himself for the purpose of his own self-fulfilment. Thus did Shri Krishna as the living Guru on earth deal with Arjuna, His loving disciple. Leading him step by step through the many intricacies of the divine teaching, the Lord, by an act of grace gave him, as He found him firm and strong in devotion, the divine eye by which the disciple obtained the beatific vision he had yearned to see, and so the whole mystery was unravelled before him.

This throws light on the Guru's method of dealing with his disciples. Saints and sages of all times have spoken of the benign and mysterious manner in which, during the course of their instruction, they were in moments of extreme distress and weariness, visibly and invisibly helped and supported by their Guru, and they have ever sung of the Guru's grace and favour, which, as they themselves gratefully acknowledge, like a never-failing balm brought them solace and relief when they lay afflicted in heart with sorrow and regret. "The Guru," says Kabir, "by His grace rescued me when I was being crushed in the oil-press like a measure of sesame." "The Guru," says he in another place, "guarded me mercifully as I was confounded by a serpent (of worldly temptation) ready to strike me with its poisonous

fangs." In a remarkable old book, the Bhagatmál of Nabhaji (1578 A. D.), which gives the history and the hymns of the many saints of India, are recorded interesting and instructive personal experiences of these saints showing how at critical moments of their spiritual struggle, they were blessed with the grace of their Guru which enabled them to fight the battle of life and to face its trials and tribulations and to achieve victory at the end.

It is not, however, to be supposed that the Guru's grace of which so much is said by all the seekers on the path, comes to any one for the mere asking. There may come misery and yet more misery, while you are asking for grace: the fact of the matter is that He who is to shower His Grace on you He also knows better—knows best. Again, the law is that the battle of life has to be fought by you, and by no one else: no one can fight it for you; the Guru or God, only helps you to fight it. God helps those who help themselves, is a trite saying and a true one. The Guru is your guide, philosopher and friend on earth, and is ever by your side to help, to enlighten, to encourage, to cheer you, as you tread your way through rough and smooth, through fair and foul. You are out on a long, risky voyage on the high

seas, to which this mundane existence is often rightly compared. You have to swim all alone by dint of your own strength fighting the mighty furious waves in mid-ocean, confronted by the deep and treacherous eddies that lie along your route with hail and gale above and man-eating monsters and seadragons below. Having strained every nerve to get along, you feel absolutely exhausted and done for, ready to lay down life, remembering your Guru for the last time in anticipation of death, thinking perhaps in despair that He had deserted you at the very time when you needed Him most. And lo! there rises a mighty wave, on the crest of which you ride, or are made to ride, for your own strength is failing you, and are carried with one mighty sweep as in a swift vessel on to the harbour safe and triumphant, singing the mercy and grace of Him who has in a moment changed, by a miracle, as it were, despair into hope and hope into victory. Why marvel at this? It is the old, old story of give and take. You place on the altar of your Guru's feet an offering (*Bhenta*) of all you call your own, and in return you receive the *prasada* (grace) of life eternal.

Thus the long, laborious process of man's development and his eventual emancipation depend



absolutely on the august personality and gracious help of the Guru. Therefore, to the disciple a break in the relationship with his Guru, under whose protecting wing he grows from day to day, even as the baby grows under the fostering care of its mother, is unthinkable, until, of course, the disciple relieved of his separate existence, merges into the all and like a drop falls into the the ocean from which he emerged. Those who have successfully trodden the path have left us in no doubt on the point. Here is a gem from Guru Nanak : "When the true Guru is merciful, faith is perfected ; when the true Guru is merciful, man shall never grieve ; when the true Guru is merciful, man shall know no sorrow ; when the true Guru is merciful, man shall enjoy heavenly bliss, when the true Guru is merciful, what fear has man of death ? When the true Guru is merciful, man obtaineth the nine treasures ; when the true Guru is merciful, man is absorbed in the True One."

(*Manjh-ki-war*)

And yet another from the *Adi* saint Kabir : "If the rafters be taken from a house, the roof will fall, so without God's name how can man be saved ? As water will not remain without a vessel, so without a religious guide man shall go to hell. As without a plough-

man land cannot be tilled, as without a thread jewels cannot be strung, and as without a loop clothes cannot be fastened, so without a holy guide man shall go to hell. As a child cannot be born without a father and mother, as clothes cannot be washed without water, as one cannot ride without saddle and bridle, as without music there cannot be dancing, so without a Guru man cannot reach God's Court. As the bad woman leaving her husband looketh for another, thus eager should man be to obtain a Guru."

*(Kabir's Hymns from Macauliffe)*

## V. The Quest for a Guru

As to the quest for a Guru, however, all depends upon your choosing rightly. Woe betide you if you choose wrongly on this perilous path! You must be equipped in order to be able to choose rightly, with the initial qualities of a discriminating head and heart. Choose with the heart alone, exercising little discrimination, and you err. Choose with the puffy head, unhelped by the chastened heart, and you err still more miserably. In olden times the home was the best school for such initial preparation. They called parents the first Guru-Deva, or rather the second, in deference to the Guru of Gurus, the

Almighty God, the third being the secular teacher. The fourth and last, but not least, is the spiritual Preceptor and Guide. It was not so difficult to make a right choice then. The task is beset with difficulties of its own in our degenerate times when the world, attracted more by the transitory and the fleeting, has fallen far from its high spiritual ideals. Clever persons often arise to work on the credulity of their less fortunate brothers. They, having their own axe to grind, try to exploit others in all manner of sophistry and other nefarious tricks. And the unwary folk, possessing emotional natures and filled with the impassioned desires to traverse the ethereal heights lying so far beyond the ordinary human ken, are easily made the dupes of. Yet the quest has to be made and by none other than the seeker himself. Only let him set about his task, arduous and exacting though it is, in all seriousness and earnestness. Let him first equip himself with the necessary initial training from wherever he can get it. He will find it here, there and everywhere, if only he has the mind to seek really earnestly. He will thus be fitted out with a heart pure as the mirror that reflects rightly; with a head that understands unprepossessingly and quickly; with a conscience that befriends unerringly. Thus,

with wisdom in his head, with humility in his heart, and with zeal in his pocket, as his passage money, let him now embark upon his momentous voyage. He should, at the very outset, form a very clear and definite idea of the Ideal Guru, so amply described in appropriate books. The road is not absolutely without its land-marks and mile-stones, though much less trodden now-a-days than it used to be, it undoubtedly is. He must at the same time be very particular about his purpose. What is the Guru wanted for? Is it to get from or through Him the benefits of the world, son, wealth, power and so forth? If so the aspirant is sadly mistaken. Nor does the Guru claim to get him these things. As he is not evidently an aspirant of the right sort himself, he will never succeed in finding the Guru of the right sort. The Ideal Guru, having Himself thrown away His love and attachment for the things of this world, aye, having thrown away His *Ahankāra* (Egoism), makes no disciples of people who approach Him with a view to gratifying the appetites of their five senses.

Let us end our discussion of this rather inexhaustible subject with a short quotation from a book from which we have often quoted, and then leave the disciple to carry on with his quest in

the best light of his own experience, as is done by him in all the other matters of life, always proceeding intently though cautiously, vigorously though slowly, zealously though dispassionately : " That which is the night of all beings," says the Bhagwadgita, " is the time of waking for him (*Sanjami*, the disciplined man); when other beings are wakened then it is the night for the saint who seeth" (B. G., II, 69). The point to note here is that the Guru, the perfected man as he is, is absolutely different from the man of the world in his outlook on life. He is gifted with peace into whom all desires flow as rivers flow into the ocean which is filled with water but remaineth unmoved - not he who desireth desires ; (B. G., II, 70). And he has then attained to the Brahman state," B. G., II, 72 ). Such then is the Ideal Guru.

Then what place is there for the impostors who live for themselves and who, far from showing the road, block it by their mendacious claims? Is it difficult for the real aspirant and the seeker for truth to find them out? Is the search for the true Guru tedious and wearisome? Are the difficulties of the search stupendous and discouraging? These things matter very little to the real aspirant and the earnest seeker. His mind is made up and his purpose is clear. Therefore

all is worth his righteous endeavour. Blessed is he who endeavours. And finally we must remember that as we succeed in finding the true Guru, we only enter the second, the far more important and difficult stage of the quest, in which we try to know God through the assistance of the *Satguru*, and when we have known Him, all is over ; the goal is reached and, as Guru Nanak says, our task is finished, and, as the Bhagwadgita says, the eternal state (*Brahmi stithi*) is attained. May we all be helped to achieve this, through the necessary help of the true Guru. Amen !

### Knowledge or Action ?

At the beginning of the third chapter of the Bhagwadgita is raised in the following words the question that forms the heading of this discourse. "If in thy opinion," says Arjuna to the Lord Shrikrishna, knowledge is superior to action, then why dost thou enjoin on me this terrible war, to my utmost confusion ? Pray tell me, in no uncertain words, the way by which I may reach bliss" (III, 1 to 3). The question is indeed important and far-reaching, vitally affecting the vast domain of practical life and touching the

whole range of the spiritual and moral constitution of man.

Let us first see how Arjuna is led to put this question. History relates how the great Mahabharata war, equally great, if not greater than, the great European war of recent years, was thrust on the hapless, orphaned Pandu brothers, of whom Arjuna was one, by their jealous, greedy and usurping cousins the Kurus, whose leader was the wily, headstrong Duryodhana ; and how Shrikrishna, revered for His wisdom and heroism then as now, having ill-succeeded in the matter of reconciliation between the Pandus and the self-willed Duryodhana, was won over to the side of the former by an act of divine Providence, as it were ; and how He took upon Himself the humbler duty of driving the chariot on which Arjuna sat to fight. And while thus seated in the chariot which stood in the space between the two opposing armies ready to fight, Arjuna gave way to reflections, and vividly picturing to himself the evils of war such as the sin of fratricide, the unchastity of the widows left, the perishing of the family traditions, the eventual occurrence of the *Varnasanṅkara* (class-confusion) etc., he objected to fighting ; and when pressed hard by Shrikrishna against the inadvisa-

bility of such an unwise, ignoble and un-Aryan course, he gave vent to his thoughts in a woeful strain, saying, better in this world to eat even the beggar's crust than to slay these noble Gurus (and all the dear ones). Slaying them I should taste of blood-sprinkled feasts. My heart is weighed down with grief, and I see not that it would drive away my anguish that withers up my senses, if I should attain unrivalled monarchy on earth or even sovereignty in heaven; and as he said this, he cast away his bow and arrows absolutely refusing to fight.

Evidently this lamentable fit of *Tamas* (inertia) that seized Arjuna, no less than his non-chalance and *laissez faire* policy at this perilous hour, distressed and confounded the Lord, and thus it came about that the Master decided to teach His disciple a sharp lesson—imparted in the sanest and saintliest manner—on the essentials of life. It is these wonderful teachings that have throughout the centuries won for the Bhagwadgita (Lord's song) a place of the greatest endearment and admiration.

In the first place Arjuna is advised to discriminate between what is fleeting and evanescent and what is stable and abiding. It is only the body part of man, it is taught, that dies. There



is an essential part of him that never dies. This teaching is beautifully rendered by Sir Edwin Arnold in his Song Celestial (the Bhagwadgita) :

Never the spirit was born the spirit shall cease to be  
never.

Never was time when it was not, end and beginning  
are dreams.

Birthless and changeless remaineth the spirit for  
ever.

Death has not touched it at all, dead though the house  
of it seems.

Faizi, the renowned Persian poet, in his rendering of the same idea, sings no less beautifully, specially as he imports corresponding ideas from Islamic spiritual lore : "Space and time are the conditions of the body and not of the soul, and hence the former remains bound, while the latter is free. The body, like a rotten garment has to be cast off, while the spirit, as the wearer of it remains. The soul, being absolute in essence is ever pure and fresh like its Creator, God. It is the shadow that changes and not the substance."

Why grieve then for the living or for the dead ? The dweller in the body, it is further explained, experiences in the body, childhood, youth, old age, and eventually he passes on to another body, without having himself been child, young

or old. He is ever the same. That by whom this body is pervaded is ever indestructible. No one can work the destruction of this imperishable one. "Weapons cleave him not, nor fire burneth him, nor waters wet him, nor wind drieth him away." These bodies of the embodied one, are finite and mortal, but he himself is infinite, immortal, perpetual, eternal, ancient, he is not slain when the body is slaughtered. As to pleasure and pain, they too are as transient as this body, to which they owe their existence. It is the contacts of matter that give rise to a sense of cold and heat, pleasure and pain ; they come and go, they are impermanent, and they should be borne bravely. It is idle, therefore, to grieve for anything so unworthy of grief. The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead (B. G., II, 11 to 25).

This then is the *jnana* (gnosis), the knowledge imparted to Arjuna. To this Shri Krishna gives the name of *San̥khyā* or *buddhi yoga* or *jnana yoga*, i.e., the knowledge of self-realisation, which is the same thing as God-realisation.

What effect this knowledge, this wisdom, this gnosis, has on practical life—the life as it is lived on earth from day to day, from hour to hour—is next taught. It is explained that with the attain-

ment of this knowledge, the whole panorama of life is changed. The fleeting, the evanescent loses its importance. The worldly desires that formerly exercised an over-powering influence, dwindle into insignificance ; the hopes and promises held out in the scriptures as to the attainment of pleasures and comforts in this world and of heaven in the next, in reward for good actions, appear hollow in contrast to bliss achieved, or achievable, on acquiring true wisdom. Both pleasure and pain, the two hard facts of life and the ruling sentiments of humanity, appear as delusive as they are transient and impermanent, and hence unreal. In fact they are both wombs of pain (*duḥh yoni*). A man of knowledge, therefore, does not allow himself to be buffeted by the pairs of opposites (*duand*), but rises above them and goes about one-pointed, is ever steadfast in purity, careless of possessions and full of the self (*atma*, his basic principle).

He may move about in the world of actions, but he is hardly affected by the fruits thereof. He dwells in union with the divine and remains free from attachments, balanced both in success and failure, abandons good and evil deeds, never works for gain or results and is firmly fixed in Divinity. Arjuna, wonderstruck at this descrip-

tion, further wants to know how such a man talks, sits, walks and behaves generally. He is told that such a man, having relinquished the desires of the heart, is satisfied in the *Self* by the *Self* ( *Atmani Atmana Tushta* ) ; is free from worries, passions, fear and anger ; is undisturbed by whatever hap of fair and foul. He sits harmonised, taking God as his supreme goal. He walks among sense-objects unmoved by them, yet utilizing them in his service like a sturdy taskmaster. He is neither unduly pleased at good nor vexed at evil, and hence he speaks not ill of, nor flatters, any one. He is discreet in his talk. The one object of his life that forms the target of his attentions and the pivot of his thoughts is God, and God alone. Hence he is ever steady in the midst of the unsteady life of senses. This is the *Jnan* or *Brahman Jnan*, Divine Knowledge, which Shrikrishna imparted to Arjuna in order to remove his grief at the prospect of devastating war to induce him to do his duty, and to play his part honourably and well in the impending war like a good Kshatrya, and for the matter of that, to fight the battle of life in the same manner (B. G., II, 39 to 72).

But *Jnan*, or true wisdom, is not a thing that can be easily assimilated. It is not something

spurious or external that can be poured from one vessel into another. It is a state of being, that covers the whole physical, spiritual, moral and social constitution of man, and forms the very woof and warp of his existence. It is styled the Brahmic or divine state, established in which even at the hour of death one attains one's goal, which is *Nirvan* the final beatitude. It is in fact a state of realisation that comes by long culture and proper discipline.

Arjuna could not, therefore, be expected to realise this state of knowledge all at once, by the magic of the spoken word. It is at this stage that he raises the question that embodies the heading of this discourse. While expounding knowledge, Shrikrishna has said much both in praise and dispraise of action. The fact of the matter is that action may be of two kinds—that done without any desire for fruit or reward, and that in which the desire for fruit or reward is the only incentive. The one is commended and the other not. For it is said :

“Work is verily far inferior to *buddhiyog* ; take thou refuge in *buddhi*. Pitable are those who work for fruit (II, 49).

The context indicates quite clearly that work here means work with desire for fruit and what

is meant by *buddhi* or *buddhiyog* is nothing more nor less than knowledge or true wisdom (*Jnan*).

Arjuna has failed to grasp what work without desire for fruit could possibly mean, though he finds no difficulty in realising the rudimentary idea of all religious teaching, namely that work with a desire for fruit stands in the way of wisdom. Hence Arjuna's question, if knowledge is superior to action, as it certainly is in this sense, then why enjoin any action at all. Shrikrishna, fully appreciating the difficulty of His disciple, first of all gave him to understand that the kind of action enjoined by Him is that which is free from desire for fruit, for it does not come into consideration for the purpose of any contrast with knowledge. But an action done for fruit, though it may be necessary in the initial stages of the evolutionary process to which humanity is subject, stands condemned as soon as the aspirant sets his foot on the threshold of spiritual knowledge (II, 41 to 44).

There is nothing strange about this : all world-teachers have taught the same thing. You cannot serve both God and Mammon, says Christ. And it is said in the Alqoran :

“ Know that the life of the world is but a sport and vain amusement and worldly pomp and bragging among you, and trying to multiply

wealth and children are like rain-growth, the vegetation delighteth the unbelievers, then it withers so that thou seest it turned yellow and becoming a glit. The life of this world is nothing but a provision of vanity" (57, 20).

This is exactly the puzzle-point of Arjuna, as it must be that of every novice in spirituality. All the goodly things of the world being thus of a transient nature, portraying nothing but disaster and ruin in the end, why yearn for them? Why multiply species, why hoard wealth and build houses, and why crave for lordship and power?

Arjuna has to be taught that the evil lies not in the things themselves, it lies in how a man takes them. All depends upon motive, and motive is mental. Worldliness is not bad, but worldly-mindedness is. Everything in itself is a grace of God, but inordinate love and improper use of them are disastrous. Good food and clothing, wives and children, etc., are blessings of God, but they prove a curse and misery when they are so used as to obstruct the path to Him.

In order to seek God, one need not, therefore, forsake the world by renouncing it literally and by casting aside all social duties and secular engagements. On the contrary, these secular engagements, when not slavishly followed but

kept within bounds, become a sure aid and a help in the realisation of divinity.

This is what is meant by Shrikrishna when he enjoins action without desire for fruit, *i. e.*, any fruit other than the realisation of God. "Surrendering," it is said, "all action to God, with thy thoughts resting on the Supreme Self, getting rid of hope and egoism, free from mental fever, fight" (III, 30). It is insisted that perfection is attained by performing action in this way, just as it was attained of yore by Janaka and others, who remained at the helm of affairs as the august rulers of men and builders of mighty kingdoms. (III, 19 and 20).

Another motive for action, when none exists for your own perfection (that having already been reached by you), is that you have to work for the maintenance of the world (*Lok Sangrah* III, 20), or the salvation of others. Shrikrishna, like many another prophet, would say, "I come not to destroy but to build," and by His timely lead and guidance He certainly saved civilization. The difficulty, however, lies in the fact that action is said to bind and prevent enlightenment. For this the remedy prescribed by the Lord is to understand the higher meaning of action, in which case it does not bind, but rather enlightens.



In order fully to appreciate the scheme of action given in the Gita, we have to remember that it is of a progressive nature. The lower rung of the ladder is prescribed for those still tied to the interest of earth and to the performance of action with interested motives. Such persons are ignorant and will do action from the very narrow view point of selfishness. Let them do so until they learn to know better. The wiser people should not interfere with them ; but while doing disinterested action themselves, they should render all action attractive to the ignorant who are attached to the fruits thereof ( III, 26 ). The next stage is reached when the aspiring ego does action purely for his own spiritual uplift.

He then tries to separate himself from his vehicles, his physical and subtle sheaths and all his environment, until he stands apart and is able to say, " All action is done by *Prakirti*, nature, according to divine law, and not by the real Self, the I (III, 27 and 28). As he feels himself, one with the All, and is identified so closely with the divine essence that he cries, "All is done by God, the universal Self," and this is the ultimate stage of self-surrender, self-renunciation, proclaimed in all religions as the *Summum bonum* of existence. And as he reaches this last stage, there remains

nothing more for him to do, he is content in himself, there is no interest for him in things done nor in any thing left undone, nor does any object of his depend on any being (III, 17 and 18).

But though the need for what may be called a compulsory *karma* or action no longer exists for him, and according to Hindu philosophy, there is no longer any compulsory birth for him either, yet he may still resort to action or he may take voluntary rebirth, for the service of others. How beautifully has a Persian sage described the state of one engaged in helping others : "Of the two aspirants, while the one, extricating himself from the whirlpool, wins and stands exulting on the shore, the other keeps struggling with the waves in order that he may, with him, extricate his weakling drowning brother."

For all these different stages in growth and culture the Gita lays down a law, and that is that our higher and essential nature prompts us to go on and on, but that the rate of progress and the number of stages in the evolutionary process are marked by the differences in the temperament and the constitution of each evolving ego. The wise course, therefore, is to follow nature as advised by the Greek philosophers, or in other words, to find out one's place and proceed from that.

position. All attempts at imitation and external expedients will surely fail ; the truth is put most aptly in the following verse of the Gita : “Better one’s own *Dharma*, though not perfect, than the *Dharma* of another, though well performed. Better death in one’s own *Dharma*. *Dharma* of another is fraught with fear” (III, 35).

The word *Dharma* is sometimes taken to mean a mere religious creed, and so this verse is used as an authority against any one changing his religion. This seems far from being the truth. The word *Dharma* is difficult to translate, its meaning being very extensive. The nearest approach to its sense here would seem to be that of duty. The Persian poet Faizi, however, seems to have done very well by translating it as *Aeen*, constitution or law, his rendering of the verse being :

“One who works according to his own constitution, finds the door of God’s grace open to him.” How consonant this with the idea that man is a law unto himself.

## II

Having now seen what Shrikrishna means by action, we can very well understand His reply to Arjuna’s question referred to at the beginning of this discourse. “There are” says Shrikrishna, “two

paths to Divinity," one is that of knowledge, called *Saṅkhyā yoga* or *Jñān yoga*, and the other that of disinterested action called *Karma yoga* ( III, 3 ). Reading this in the light of the context, one is forced to say that the knowledge path referred to excludes action, i. e., the pursuit of the ordinary worldly life, and the question is whether such a path would lead to final beatitude. No attempt is made in the Gita to discuss this point. Evidently it was taken as a very old truism that the knowledge path as apart from that of action, could lead to the highest bliss and there is no reason why it should not be accepted as a truism now. It is to be conceded, therefore, that, should a man choose to follow the knowledge path, i. e. to devote himself entirely to a life of divine meditation without entering into what is called the ordinary worldly life, and without caring for secular engagements or activities, he would surely achieve perfection. Verse 4 of Chapter III, read alone, might lend colour to the idea that without such action no perfection is possible; but read with the context it is impossible to lay down such a proposition, in the absence of all authority and experience. History is full of examples. Buddha, Christ and so many other recluses achieved perfection in the loneliness

of retirement : whether such a course is commendable, or is suited to all, is a question which must be answered in the light of individual circumstances and temperament.

It is no use stretching texts, and reading meanings into them simply to suit our own views of life. In the Hindu Shastras there are three schools of thought according as they lay stress on the particular method of realisation ; these are the three well-known methods of *Jnan*, *Bhakti* and *Karma*, that is, Knowledge, Devotion and Action ; and each school tries to prove that the Bhagwad-gita supports its own creed. But as evidently, these schools of thought, *per se*, had not come into existence in the time of the Gita, it goes without saying that any idea of the Gita definitely supporting any of them is entirely out of the question. The creed of the Gita is catholic in character, its primary object being to induce Arjuna, (and others after him) to put his shoulder to the wheel. Without propounding any creed of its own, the Gita took the current philosophies as they were, and struck its own note which cannot be summed up better than in its own words :

“There is nothing in the three worlds, O Parth, that should be done by me, nor anything unattained that might be attained ; yet I mingle in action.

For if I mingled not ever in action unwearied, men all around would follow my path. These worlds would fall into ruin, if I did not perform action ; I should be the author of racial confusion, and should destroy these creatures" (III, 22 to 24).

Without, therefore, laying down the hazardous proposition whether knowledge is superior to action, or *vice versa*, Shrikrishna, great *Jogeshwara* or Man of Action as he was, makes it sufficiently clear to which path he gives the preference.

The teaching of the Bhagwadgita on this question may be summarised as below :

1. The world, its wants and its interests which are but finite and transient, are not to be taken seriously. Though an old creed was, "Eat, drink and be merry for to-morrow you will die," Shrikrishna would say, "Bear with the world cheerfully and happily, not because to-morrow you will die, but because you will never die."

2. The goal of humanity lies in seeking the eternal, the universal God—seeking for Him primarily in the recesses of one's own heart.

3. The attaining of this goal constitutes real knowledge—true wisdom.

4. The two paths of attaining this goal are those—

- (a) Of knowledge (meditation), in which one is absorbed wholly and solely in the worship of Divinity without regard to secular duties and worldly interests; and
- (b) Of Action (disinterested), in which God is realized in the midst of and by the performance of, secular engagements from a high pedestal.

5. There is no rivalry between these two paths, neither can one be said to be superior to the other. It is all a question of ways and means, of individual fitness by temperament, environment, etc. For one reason or another, only a few can follow the path of knowledge ; the rest of us must go by the other.

6. The scheme of the path of Action which concerns the major portion of humanity is, however, progressive in character. Beginning from where one is tied to the small selfish interests, to where one can identify himself with the All, there are very many stages in the evolutionary process. At each stage the motive for action changes. Service of humanity, and undiluted altruism of a very high order, mark the last stage. It is for the aspiring ego to find his place in these struggles.

## The Yajnas

Many and various are the *yajnas* laid down in the Vedas. They were the earliest form of divine worship, in the name of what in the Vedas are called Devas. *Deva* has been variously described as a celestial being, much like the angels of other religions, each in charge of a certain phase of Nature, such as rain, wind, etc. ; as personified elemental powers ; or as the different names of one unifying God. This worship was performed by means of a ritual called the *Agnihotra*—the pouring in of clarified butter, odorous herbs, nuts, etc., into the sacredly-kindled fire, for the sake of the Devas, and to the accompaniment of Vedic songs sung in their praise. The underlying idea was to render them homage and to make them an offering of a share of the worldly gifts received from them. *Yajnas*, thus being in the nature of sacrifice, are now known as forms of worship by means of sacrifices. Latterly, however, subtler forms of worship have also been recognised in which no offering of a tangible or visible object is necessary, the whole process of worship being purely a mental one, such as is signified in the daily prayer (*sandhya*).



Jaimini's *Purav Mimansa* (one of the six well-known philosophies) has developed these *yajnas* into a system. Manusmriti amplifies them and insists on their performance. Through them, says Manusmriti, the Rig Veda treats of the praises to Devas, the Yajur Veda, of the duties of mankind, and the Sam Veda, of the duties to ancestors (IV. 124).

The Bhagwadgita, while dealing with the subject of *Buddhi Yoga* (spiritual culture), begins with a passing reference to *yajnas* in the following words : " The foolish are enamoured of Vedic words (presumably the Vedic doctrines regarding ritualism and sacrifices) utter flowery talk saying 'There is naught but this.' They are full of desires of the world, are strongly attached to worldly pleasures and power, have *swarga* (heaven) as their goal, perform many and various ceremonies for the attainment thereof, and consider birth as the reward of action. Such men are not fitted for high spiritual culture (herein inculcated)" (III, 42—44).

This is followed by an injunction as to the rule of conduct, that has caused much heart-searching. This injunction is :—

" The Vedas deal with the three *Gunas* (qualities or attributes of matter—*Sat*, *Raj* and

*Tam* ), be thou above the three. All the Vedas are of as much (more appropriately, as little) use to an enlightened person, as is a tank in a place covered all over with water' (Il. 45 and 46).

It has therefore been said that this furnishes a clue to the attitude of the Bhagwadgita, not only towards the Vedic sacrifices but towards the Vedas themselves, and it is surmised that the Bhagwadgita condemns the *yajnas* and belittles the Vedas. But as we proceed and get fairly well into the discussion of the subject of *Karm yoga* (a higher species of action that is not only commended in the Bhagwadgita but may rightly be said to form the framework of the masterpiece), we find the *yajnas* treated in a far different strain.

The following seven verses of the Bhagwadgita are in point. "In the beginning of creation the Creator produced mankind and the *yajnas* together, and said : Do you multiply by means of this (*yajna*), may it be the giver to you of all your desired objects. Please the Devas with this, and may the Devas please you. Pleasing each other you will attain the highest good. Pleased with the *yajnas*, the Devas will give you the enjoyments you desire. And he who enjoys what has been given by them, without sharing

aught with them is a thief indeed. Those who eat the leavings of *yajnas* are righteous and are freed from sins. But those who cook only for themselves eat sinful food. From food are produced all creatures, food is produced from rain, and rain from *yajna*. Know thou that from Brahman action groweth, and Brahman from the Imperishable cometh. Therefore the Brahman, the all-permeating, is ever present in *yajna*. He who in this world does not follow the wheel thus revolving, is sinful, leads a sensual life, he lives in vain" (III, 10 to 16).

No apology is necessary for this long quotation, as it throws light on the true attitude of the Bhagwadgita towards the *yajnas*, the Devas and for the matter of that, the Vedas. As a passage insisting on the inevitable need for the performance of *yajnas*, and condemning those who will not perform them, it stands well marked in the clarity of thought and force of expression.

But the teaching does not stop here, it goes yet further, saying—

"Perishable is the fruit that accrues to those who worship Devas. Such men are of small intelligence. They who worship Devas, go to the Devas. And My devotees go to Me" (VII, 23).

The question of the *yajnas* being on a par with that of the Devas, to whom the *yajnas* are evidently offered, the text indicates well enough that the *yajnas*, as a means of the worship of Devas who grant only transient worldly pleasures, are comparatively far inferior to what may be called the divine worship. And this point is emphasised throughout the Bhagwadgita in more than one place. For instance, in Chapter IV, verses 25 to 33, the word *yajna* is given a more extended acceptance so as to include in it every form of self-discipline like the control of the senses, of thought, *pranayam* (breath control), *dan* (alms), *jap* (silent recitation), *tap* (austerity), etc., and at the top of all these forms which have been called the different kinds of *yajnas*, is placed what is adroitly called the *jnan yajna* (sacrifice by means of knowledge). And this *jnan yajna* is further picturesquely described as follows :

The act of offering is Brahman (the Eternal) ; what is poured into fire (butter, etc.) is Brahman ; fire itself is Brahman ; the one who makes the offering is Brahman. It is reaching Brahman by means of meditation upon Brahman (IV, 24).

What is however intended to be conveyed is that while by the ordinary *yajna*, only the perishable good is gained, by the performance of the

sacrifice of knowledge, which is nothing more nor less than the acquisition of true knowledge, the essential oneness of everything is realised. To speak in the very words of the text, all delusion is then gone, and man sees all beings first in himself and then in God (IV, 35).

To take one more instance, in Chapter IX, 20 to 23, we read, The knowers of the three, (branches of learning, apparently the three Vedas), the drinkers of the *soma-juice* worship Me by means of *yajnas* for a way to heaven, and reaching the holy world of the Lord of Devas, enjoy in heaven the heavenly pleasures, and return to this mortal world after the merit of their virtue is exhausted. Thus those who wish for the objects of desire follow the ordinances of the Vedas, and obtain as the fruit of their action, this coming and going. But as to those who worship Me, meditating on Me alone and thinking of no other, I take full care of them. In fact to the Devas go the worshippers of Devas, to the *pitris* (ancestors) go the worshippers of *pitris*, to *bhutas* (elementals) go the worshippers of *bhutas*, and My worshippers come unto Me.

The comparative inferiority, however, of the *yajnas* to divine worship, indicated in passages like the above, has inclined many thinkers of our

time to the view that the higher knowledge regarding Self and Divinity—*Adhyatam Vidya* as it is called—so remarkably developed in the *Upanishads*, is the product of the times posterior to the age of the Vedas, which are concerned with rituals and sacrifices alone. To this the orthodox student has always demurred, not without a force in his argument as he takes his stand on texts such as that given below, where the idea of the great Divine Being is referred to in the Vedas :—

“That which is to be known in the Vedas am I, indeed I am the Veda knower, and the author of *Vedant* (the end of Vedas, referring evidently to Upanishads which come at the end of the Vedas), I excel the destructible, and am more excellent also than the indestructible ; in the world, and in the Vedas I am proclaimed the supreme spirit (*Purush Uttam*)” (XV, 15—18).

Are the *yajnas* then a stage and a stage only on the path of spiritual culture, the first rung of the ladder, as it were, to be no more thought of by the aspiring ego when that stage is passed by ? The structural idea of all religious philosophy seems to be that the desire for the things of this world, or even of heaven, keeps us tied to finite and transient things, and is the cause of *Samsara* (birth). The *yajnas*, as ordinarily under-

stood, are performed with such desires and hence they are apt to bind us and to prevent us from attaining our ultimate goal. Yet the Bhagwadgita has not failed to bring out the point that it is possible so to perform the *yajnas* as to prevent their binding effect, and to use them entirely with the object of attaining one's destiny. Nothing could be more concise and eloquent, as to this, than the following :

“The world is bound by action unless performed for the sake of *yajna*. For that sake, free from attachment, perform action” (III, 9).

The meaning of this is made clear by what has been stated by Jaimini on the subject of *yajnas*. According to him, what is done by man as a result of his natural promptings without any scriptural command, is *purusharth* and creates bondage, and what is done by means of *yajnas* on account of scriptural commands is *kratvarth* and does not bind (Jaimini's Sutras, Chapter IV, Pad I, Adhikaram 2). What Jaimini calls *kratvarth*, the Bhagwadgita, in the above verse, calls *yajnarth* (for the sake of *yajna*).

The idea is what would in modern ways be expressed by saying, *yajnas* should be performed for the sake of *yajna* alone, without any ulterior motive, such as the gaining of this desire or that.

Thus the sting which is desire, having been removed, there is no reason why action, or for the matter of that, *yajna* should bite. One other condition, which would altogether destroy the binding nature of *yajna*, has been stated in the words *Mukṭsanga*—freedom from attachment. And what is meant by this freedom from attachment will come out on pondering over the verses II, 61 and 62, which are to the following effect :

“Man musing on the objects of sense, conceiveth an attachment (*sanga*) for these; from attachment ariseth desire; from desire anger cometh forth; from anger proceedeth delusion; from delusion confused memory; from confused memory, the destruction of reason; from destruction he perisheth.

Again in XVII, 11 and 12, the matter is stated still more explicitly :—

*Yajna* offered by men without desire for fruit, as enjoined in the scriptures, under the firm belief that it is a duty, is called *sattavic* (pure). The *yajna* offered with a view to fruit and for the purpose of self-glorification is *rajasic* (passionate). To sum up, the position seems to be that the *rajasic yajna*, a lower species of *yajna* in which the things of the world are aimed at, cannot be compared with what has been called in IV, 33,



the *gnan yajna*, but the *sattavic yajna*, in which no other motive than mere obedience to the divine command is present, is nothing short of *Jnan* (true wisdom) itself. And as to this latter *yajna*, there goes forth the command :—

*Yajna*, as well as *dana*, and *tapa* (sacrifice, charity, and austerity) should never be relinquished. They should always be performed. Only the fact should never be lost sight of, that they are to be performed without a desire for fruit and without attachment” (XVIII, 5 and 6).

But the Bhagwadgita is nothing if not far-seeing. It is a book of instructions not only for the highly advanced, but also for the struggler of any degree. Therefore, with its depth of vision and its broadness of mind it would convey the hint forthwith ; thus :—

“Let no wise man unsettle the mind of the ignorant attached to action, but acting in harmony with Me, render all action attractive. While the wise act without attachment, the ignorant do so with attachment (III, 26).

It would be well to remember here that the Bhagwadgita, as well as the Upanishads which preceded it, and Bhuddhism which in all probability followed it, are all a protest against the far too extended tendencies towards ritualism on which

Brahmanism laid so much stress. While the place of rituals cannot altogether be ignored in any sound system of life and conduct, the danger-point, at which they are liable to stand divorced from the spirit for the expression of which they have a meaning and a place, has to be very carefully guarded against. That explains how the Bhagwadgita seems to condemn *yajnas* at times and encourage at others, in its own characteristic way. But, argue the philosophers like Shri Shankara and others of his ilk, where is the need for *yajna*, or any action at all, when the wisdom, which is the culmination of all action according to the Bhagwadgita itself (IV, 33) is attained? Though the Bhagwadgita long preceded Shri Shankara, yet it must have been well aware of such a mentality. It has left a reply no less emphatic and clear than the argument to which it is a reply. Action, according to the Bhagwadgita, is never to be abandoned—

*Firstly*, because it can never be absolutely abandoned. Without it, the maintenance of this body would be impossible. No one for even an instant can remain actionless; everyone is helplessly driven to action by the qualities of nature (*prakṛiti*) (III, 5 to 8).

*Secondly*, because whatever a great man does,

that other men also do. What standard of conduct he setteth up, that the people follow (III, 21).

*Thirdly*, because it is necessary to act for the maintenance of mankind (*Loka sangrah*) if and when there is nothing to do for one's own self. (III, 20).

"There is," says Shrikrishna, "nothing for Me (whether He is a God-man or a Man-God does not matter) to do in all the three worlds, that should be done by Me, nor anything unattained that might be attained, yet I engage Myself in action. If I do not engage in action these worlds would come to grief. I should be responsible for the breakdown of the social system and the destruction of civilization," (III, 21 to 24).

Beautiful arguments these, beautifully expressed. Do thy duty, is the burden of the Song of Life, the Bhagwadgita. Find your allotted task, it is insisted, according to the order (*varna*) to which you belong, and heroically stick to it, come death, come life, come victory or defeat, honor or dishonor. This is *swavdharma*—one's own part to do, this is yoga, the *summum bonum*.

So may we all perform our duty—*yajnas* included—and, in the words of the Manusmriti, attain worldly desires (*kaman*) as well as immortality (*amritam*), (II, 5).

### The *Varana* System

*Varana* was the ancient classification of society amongst the old Aryan people. In those early heroic and spiritual times nothing could be more natural or essential for the people than to specialise in matters heroic and spiritual, and to pursue them as an art or profession with the skill and zeal of an adept. Those who did so were respectively called Kshatriyas and Brahmanas. The latter, concerned with spirituality, were engaged not only in living up to the very high ideals of a spiritual life themselves, to justify the reputation they enjoyed of being the knowers of Brahman or God, but also in imparting the spiritual lore to others, jealously guarding the portals of knowledge and officiating at ceremonies and rituals, with which the Vedic religion abounds. To the Kshatriyas, who were the experts in the arts of heroism, belonged the duty of governance and fighting; but be it noted, that the fighting they engaged in was nothing like the inhuman massacre of modern times. The Sanskrit word which gave them their name is derived from the root *raḁhsha*, protection; hence anything of the nature of aggression was unthinkable. After these two very important and necessary divisions of society,

the rest of the people were free to adopt anything that suited them or came in their way—agriculture, commerce, etc., for their livelihood, with the reservation that the unskilled labourer would have to depend upon personal service alone, and earn his living thus as best he could. Hence two more divisions of society, the Vaishyas and the Sudras, so called because the former were versed in what are now denominated “Bread and Butter Sciences,” and the latter were petty on account of their small wit and knowledge, came into being.

In the famous *Purushsukta* of the Rig Veda (X,—90), creation is described as an act of the mighty *yajna* (sacrifice) of the *Purusha*, the Supreme Spirit. “This Divine Victim,” it is stated, “was one whose mouth was the Brahmans, his two arms the Kshatriyas, his two thighs the Vaishyas and his two feet the Sudras.” What a graphic description of the body politic this! It would be impossible to draw a picture more vivid and true of the organized state of society, which was such as we can now imagine in thought only; but we dare not venture to hope that those ideal conditions will come back to us, at any rate, not in the near future. Yet how we pant for the visualisation of this or any other social system that will purge humanity of the ills of life from which

it is suffering in the chaotic conditions that prevail at present.

A word about the meaning of the term *varna*, by which name the classification is known. One meaning of *varna* in Sanskrit is colour, and we find it stated in the Shastras that the Brahmanas were known by their white (*svet*) colour, the Kshatriyas by red (*rakṣa*), the Vaishyas by yellow (*peet*), a mixture of red and white, and the Sudras by black (*Krishna*) colour. Has colour then anything to do with the matter? We know that on the face of things the colour or complexion of a people depends largely upon climatic conditions. This accounts for Europeans being white, Indians brown and Negroes black. But mysticism, which concerns itself more with the inner man than with the outer, makes us aware of certain subtle facts. One of these is the existence of a certain subtle, invisible yet material, fluid that continually emanates from man, or for the matter of that, from any substance, animate or inanimate. The particles of the fluid, like the minutest effluvia, are flowing like electric sparks in the ether (*akāśh*). This is a kind of bodily fire and is called the mysterious occult force, for it travels from man to man and affects him for good or evil. Mesmer, the founder of the well-known doctrine of mesmerism in the

18th century, gave it the name of Animal Magnetism. Its Sanskrit name is *tejas*, a kind of *agni* (fire). Some eminent Scientists of the West have called it the aura, which is defined in the lexicons as a subtle fluid supposed to flow from the body.

Modern science may not yet be prepared to admit the existence of this subtle fluid on account of its comparatively gross methods of enquiry and demonstration, but signs are not wanting to show which way the wind is blowing. "Search where we may," says Professor William, "this force (magnetism) has been universally acknowledged, and used by all tribes and nations; and so, far from this being but a science of yesterday, it enjoys the double reputation of being very old and has stood the test of ages; indeed, we maintain that it is the oldest science extant and nothing was proclaimed as a science prior to it." Any number of similar quotations could be cited, but this one will be sufficient to show that to the ancients this force was a stern reality, founded on long ages of experience.

Another mystic fact, founded on the existence of this force, is that these auras, as they spread out into the ether around us, bear the impress of our thoughts, passions and desires and evince appropriate forms, colours, smell, and sounds,

like all other emanations of the body ; and that whenever set in motion by the human will, they assume such forms and colours as to render them capable of indicating the real character of the man. Forms and colours being the essential properties of matter, the three *gunas* (attributes or qualities) of *prakṛiti* (matter) are each assigned a colour, the *sattvic guna*, otherwise called the pure, is said to be white in colour, the *rajsic guna* (called the passionate), red, and the *tamsic* (called the inert and lifeless), black. Now it is a truism that in the *prakṛiti* (nature) of the Brahmana the *sattvic guna* predominates, in that of the Kshatriya, the *rajoguna*, in that of the Vaishya, the *rajoguna* with a glimmering of the *sattvic guna*, and in that of the Sudra, the *tamo guna*. The predominance of *gunas* likewise gives the corresponding colours to the auras of these classes and may, by a process of action and reaction, give a corresponding shade of colours to their grosser bodies as well.

No wonder, therefore, that the term *varna* should have been applied to the fourfold classification, because of its indicating a characteristic colour in its subtle or physical body, as an index of the character of each class. *Varna* from this point of view would thus appear to be untranslatable. To render it as caste, as is often



done, would neither be appropriate nor happy, for caste as we know it to-day, far from resembling anything approaching *varna* is associated with ideas hardly fitted to our sense of propriety. It is inconceivable that a man's status due to the sheer accident of birth should ever bestow on him privileges, unearned by, or ill-assorted with, his merit or capacity. The rules as to how the *varna* gives a man his calling are well enunciated in the following verse of the Bhagwadgita :—

“The system of the four *varnas* was created by Me in accordance with and because of the apportionment of qualities and duties (*gunas* and *karmas*.)”

According to this, the predominance of a particular *guna* in the constitution of a man is one factor of his *varna*, and knowing as we do, that in consonance with the two well-known cardinal doctrines of Hindu Philosophy, *karma* and *janama* (action and birth), a man is not born a blank sheet, the predominance of a particular *guna* in him may well be due to a particular characteristic in his past covering very many lives. The nature of the *guna* determines his *karma*, which, in its turn determines his *guna*. Thus *guna* and *karma* acting and reacting on each other make the whole constitution of man. In other words, the *guna* makes the inherent tendencies and inclinations of man, that give

him his character, and *karma* is the long series of actions exhibiting his conduct, both influenced by and further influencing his character. Character and conduct between make or mar his life and are the source of his sustenance, be it physical, mental or moral. The Bhagwadgita has described what are called the natural *karmas* (duties indicated by inherent nature) of each *varna*, to the following effect :—

“Serenity, self-restraint, austerity, purity, forgiveness, righteousness, wisdom, knowledge, faith in God and the future world, are the duties of a Brahmana born of his nature. Prowess, splendour, firmness, dexterity, facing the battle, generosity, governance, are the duties of a Kshatriya born of his nature. Agriculture, the tending of cattle, and trade are the duties of a Vaishya born of his nature, and service (of the other three *varnas*) is the duty of a Sudra, born of his nature (XVIII. 42 to 44).

This is sufficiently illustrative of how men take their *varnas* from the combined effect of the *gunas* and *karmas* which has resulted in their nature (*Svabhava*). An eminent thinker (the late Mr. Telang), finds in this description, a statement of the moral qualities rather than of the vocational duties of the *varnas*. This may be true only in so far that the statement of

the vocational duties of Brahmanas is not so definite or complete here as appears in later works like Manusmriti, where the six-fold well-known duties of a Brahman, namely, reading and teaching of the Vedas, performing of and officiating at sacrifices, giving and taking of alms, are specifically stated ; but taking the context as a whole, it would be impossible to deny or fail to see what is meant.

That *varna* as constituted by *guna* and *karma*, gives a man his calling, is a proposition of undisputed authority and antiquity. The way we choose our careers to-day is also significant. As a rule in this matter we follow our innate tendencies and inclinations, so much so that when we happen to fail in life, it is said that we missed our avocation, *i. e.*, that we made a wrong choice in not taking up a career for ourselves in accordance with our nature. No doubt we are at times prompted or forced to take up a career that is against our gain, as it were, or against our inner nature. That would be called a case of deliberately neglecting one important factor that should influence our choice. Yet in spite of all, success may crown our efforts; it is all a question of what zeal and efforts we put forth in the new venture which we follow against the dictates of our

nature. *Karmas* would thus work independently, or in spite of the *gunas*, over-riding its dictates to a very great extent, or with complete success, according to circumstances.

What is the scope of heredity in all this ? In this vexed question of heredity, the thing to be clearly defined at the outset is our notion of heredity itself. Our modern notions of things, as tinged, like everything else, by Western ideas, taking the human soul as a blank sheet at its birth, would ascribe all that is inherent in it, to heredity and heredity alone ; while the ancients as also those moderns who know better, taking the soul to be on its onward journey of long long past, through untold lives, find it full of large capacities and potentialities, and give a wider meaning to what are called pre-natal causes, and so they assign only a limited scope to environments, of which parentage is one.

An important implication of the ancient law of birth and action has also to be borne in mind here. It is finely put in the Bhagwadgita. Arjuna, perplexed at the frailty of human efforts, asks the Lord as to the fate of one who leaves this world without having realised his goal in spite of his strivings. Is he, fallen from both this world and the next, destroyed like a broken

cloud ? is Arjuna's question. And he is emphatically assured that destruction is not his lot and he is taught that such a one first goes to the world of those who have done good and meritorious deeds, and living there many years (according to the force of his good *karma*) he is born again into the family of pure and glorious persons or of Yogins. Then he recovers the characteristics of his former life, and with these he strives again and again, irresistibly led on by his former practice until he reaches the perfection attainable by humanity (VI, 37—45). Man thus takes his parentage not haphazard, but according to the stage of his evolution. A man with a Brahmana nature would be born into a Brahmana family in which to carry on his further evolution, and he with a Kshatriya nature, in a Kshatriya family, and so forth. In a well-ordered society, therefore, *Varnas* would as a rule go by heredity, as the word heredity is commonly understood, and there would be little room for deviation or variation. The few genuine instances that we find in ancient history where a change of *Varna* took place are in themselves proof positive of these being only exceptions which prove the rule.

But in a society ill-organised and particularly one fallen from its ancient ideals long, long ago,

such as we find the Hinduism to-day, the state of things must certainly be different. The Bhagwad-gita again draws a vivid picture of this. Arjuna, on the eve of battle, reflects on the horrors of war and pleading against it, says, "Why should we not turn away from this sin (of fighting) as we see the evil of the destruction of the family. In the destruction of the family, the immemorial family traditions perish. In the perishing of the traditions, unrighteousness overcomes the whole family, the women of the family become corrupt, and with women corrupted, there arises *varan-sankāra* (the dissolution of the *varna*). This *varna-sankāra* surely leads into hell the family (so ruined) as well as those who destroy the family, and puts an end to the duties relating to community and family, (*jati* and *kula*) (I, 39 to 43).

Who can deny that we are now confronted with the *varan-sankāra* and the consequent evils, spoken of in the above passage? It is therefore absolutely impossible in these times to rely upon heredity for the interpretation or the application of the *Varna* system to the present-day conditions. Can we expect the Brahmana *Yonis* (wombs), for instance, to be the right vehicles of the Brahmana spirits always? There can be one and only one answer to this.

The question is raised whether under the changed conditions the *Varna* system will be abolished altogether, as an institution gone out of use and no longer required, or shall we restore it, and if so, how—whether in its original pristine purity or in a modified form, suited to the new conditions? Persons with different mentalities and temperaments would answer this question differently. We know it on the authority of Mahatma Gandhi that the chairman at the Social Conference at Nellore in 1915 was for abolishing all *Varnas* except that of the Brahmanas, and the Mahatma has made us aware of his own novel scheme. This is that the three upper *Varnas* should “gradually emerge, purified and equal in status, though following different occupations.” In this scheme, “the Brahmnas will be very few. Fewer still will be the soldier class, who will not be the hirelings or the unrestrained rulers of to-day, but real protectors and trustees of the nation, laying down their lives in its service. The fewest will be the Sudras, for in a well-ordered society, a minimum amount of labour will be taken from fellow men. The most numerous will be the Vaishya *varna*, that would include all professions, the agriculturists, the traders, the artizans, etc.” We are not told how the number

of the followers of each *varna* will be regulated, though it is a part of the scheme that not only the *varnas* but all the occupations included in a *varna* will be hereditary. This seems to be heredity with a vengeance. The Mahatma's reason for treating the *varnas* as hereditary is also interesting. This, in his own words, is, "The law of *varna* prescribes that a person should for his living follow the lawful occupation of his forefathers. I hold this to be a universal law governing the human family. If a man's, as distinguished from the lower animal's function is to know God, it follows that he must not devote the chief part of his life to making experiments in finding out what occupation will best suit him for earning his livelihood. On the contrary, he is to recognise that it is best for him to follow his father's occupation and devote his spare time and talent to qualifying himself for the task to which mankind is called." So the scheme needs the condition of a millennium for its thorough working, but we are told in the *Shastras* that at the time of the millennium, *Satyayuga*, there "was no *varna* system, all the people were of one family and universal brotherhood prevailed. It was in the *Treta-Yuga* that they were divided according to their innate tendencies and inclinations (*gunas*)



and keeping them in view they were expected to acquit themselves of the *karmas*" (Budhiraj on the Bhagwadgita, page 227).

With all the staunch faith he professes for the *varn-ashrama*, the Mahatama is careful to add, "I would not hesitate to reject the institution if it was proved to me that the interpretation put upon it by me has no warrant in Hinduism."

This is indeed a challenge both to the orthodox, and the unorthodox, the one, believing in the hereditary nature of the four *varnas* only, but not of the sub-callings, as it were, (which are included in a *varna*, e. g., the calling of the barber or of the black-smith, belonging, as they do to a single *varna*, the Vaishya), would not prohibit the change of such ancestral sub-callings, the other, believing not in the hereditary nature of the *varna* at all, would leave every one free to regulate his *varna* according to his choice.

Whether we accept the principle of heredity or of free choice, one thing it would be impossible to deny, namely, that merit or fitness must always be the necessary accomplishment of any person possessing a particular *varna*. The much-disputed question, however, is whether a man born in any particular *varna* could, on a proper test of merit and fitness, be admitted to another *varna*, and

whether a man having shown himself disqualified to continue in the *varna* in which he was born, could be dislodged from the same. This has ever been a question for the orthodox who are inclined naturally against any change of *varnas*, and they have at times, in support of their theories cited texts such as this. "Better one's *dharama* (duty) though destitute of merit, than the *dharmā* of another, well discharged. Better death in the discharge of one's own *dharmā*; the *dharmā* of another is full of danger." (Bhagwadgita, III, 35).

But it is difficult, as has been rightly remarked by others, to take this as an authority against any change of *varna*, or religion either. It only lays down the universal law of ethics, according to which one must stick to one's duty at all costs, whatever the duty dictated by his nature may be. It also stresses, in different language, the rule stated in the Bhagwadgita IV, 13, that the four *varnas* were based on *guna* and *karma*, to which reference has already been made at length. Besides, ancient history is not altogether devoid of instances of changes of *varna*, few and rare though they be, and the law of *Praishchit* (penance and penalties) might also give a hint as to the cause of *patita* (fallen from their position). Preposterous also looks the proposition in broad, that the mere

following of a calling pertaining to a *varna* chosen in indifferent regard for one's innate tendencies and inclinations, and pursued with indifferent success, should bestow on one the title to be admitted to and designated by that *varna*.

Be that as it may, there does not seem to be any difference of opinion in any sect of Hinduism to-day on the point that the ancient division of society into the four *varnas* was laid on a sound and sure basis and was the chief, if not the only, cause of its solidarity and strength, and that the rehabilitation of the *varnas* would be the rehabilitation of the past glory of the Aryan culture and civilization, even as its dissolution—*Varna-Sankra*—led to its fall and disintegration. Let us then all join together and make this our common purpose, and in a spirit of earnestness and humility endeavour to live the life of *Swavdharama* (one's own duty), in right real sense, the one bedrock on which was built the ancient *varna* system. All the differences as to the details will then very soon solve themselves, should we but work earnestly and rightly, full of reliance, with the eye of faith—faith in ourselves and faith in God the All-dispenser, the very Author of the *varnas*, as it is rightly and nobly said in the Bhagwad-gita by God Himself.

## Harmlessness (Ahansa).

Harmlessness (*Ahansa*) is in Hinduism considered the greatest virtue (*param dharma*). The Bhagwadgita, which, though primarily a book about war, inculcating the need for a righteous war, all the same stresses this great virtue as a means, and that a very essential means, to spiritual culture. The Lord Shrikrishna, while remonstrating with Arjuna for shirking the fight that had been thrust upon him, and blaming him for the "dejection" that had overpowered him as being "Ignoble, un-Aryan, heaven-closing, and infamous," (II, 5) also teaches him that harmlessness is a divine qualification (XVI, 2) and a great *tapas* (austerity) which should never be lost sight of (XVII, 14). Likewise in Shrimad Bhagwat, it is enjoined "Do not, with this transient and ephemeral body, injure others like a beast."

What a world of valuable truth and good advice is contained in these noble quotations, the force of which we never hesitate to admit to ! But alas ! how seldom do we, engaged and engrossed in the busy, and materialistic pursuits of this mortal life, pause to reflect on the true importance and significance of this most obvious and universally admitted truth ! Those who indulge in doing harm to others are likened to

beasts, but have we ever pondered how often in our everyday practical life, we do deserve that shameful epithet by failing to observe and think what we owe to others. For if rightly understood, the word harm is far more extensive and comprehensive than we might ordinarily realise. It implies not only bodily hurt, but also spiritual and intellectual hurt. It extends to, and includes, the breach of all those sacred obligations by which one human being is bound to another or even to what we are pleased to call the lower order of things like the animals, plants, &c. Some of us do not seem to realise that we can have any duties other than those that the state has enjoined or enforced by definite legislation or that there can be any duties towards beasts and brutes, not to mention the inanimate world. Man being superior to all creation, they say, has the natural and inherent right to use, or even to abuse, the rest of creation beside himself to any and every end and purpose which can serve his own need and pleasure, great or small, real or fanciful. Some go further than this and assert that for individual interests one has the perfect right to disregard the rights and interests of one's fellow-men.

Whilst there is yet another class, calling itself more rational according to certain notions

of social arrangements of its own, which considers it quite justifiable, in the interests of the majority, to trample under foot the interests of a minority. But all these are arbitrary rules of conduct based upon no firmer basis than selfishness and egotism, and are therefore destined to fail under the process of the universal law of evolution which is working perpetually and equitably, in spite of our will and pleasure. Perfect harmony with the whole of the created world, and also with the celestial world, is the basis of the law of progress, and it is idle to talk of the rigid observance of this principle, unless and until we are prepared to show by our mode of living, that we do well understand ourselves in right relationship to all else beside our own small individual existence which is but as a drop in the ocean.

We hear people talking of cruelty to animals, and of moral and physical evils caused thereby, and we see the activities of the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, as well as many individual efforts of this kind. The cow question and the meat-eating question are but offshoots of our energies in this direction. Without meaning to deprecate the work done by these people, it will be well for us to take time to reflect and

endeavour to find the real cause of this cruelty and thus look at the question from a deeper and wider standpoint. What is it that tempts people or leads them to be so unkind to these dumb and innocent animals, as for instance, the sheep, the goat, the cow, the donkey, &c. ? The answer is that there is something wrong radically with ourselves, and our methods of looking at life. There is something awry in the very logic, and the mode of reasoning by which we intend to regulate our existence.

And this has to be studied and understood. For do we not often observe that men famous for their practical sympathy, and for their zeal and enthusiasm of the stoppage of the evil practice of meat-eating, and of the great desirability of adopting a vegetarian diet, show a sort of hatred and spite towards their fellow-beings and often evince culpable neglect of their own kith and kin ? Why is it then that, in spite of their being so solicitous in the matter of animal diet, they are yet ready to devour the very soul of their kith and kin, who ought to be the most dearly loved by them ? Not long ago, over this very diet question a conflict arose among a certain class of men, who nevertheless agreed on the main principle of abstention from injuring

others. The evil consequences of such a bitter strife on the part of people who ought to know better and on a subject about which right thinking people can have no two opinions are most lamentable.

We must, therefore, go to the very root of the evil. It will not do merely to abstain from animal food, and to frame a few set rules regarding cruelty to animals. We ought to meet on a much broader platform, and eradicate the evil nature within us, which leads us to commit so many acts of cruelty and injustice. Let us cultivate the spirit of brotherly love and deep affection, let us rightly understand our duties as a whole, and let us ever remember that selfishness is the one thing that has to be exterminated root and branch from our hearts; let us realise that virtue (*dharma*) is an attribute of the soul that remains in the soul for ever, and not of the body which must vanish sooner or later. It is then and then alone that we shall be able to live a life worth living, wherein not only men and animals but also plants and trees and all else of God's beautiful creation will be secure against our iniquities and unjust dealings.

Are we then to suffer that others may be happy? Yes, by all means is the ready and



emphatic reply. This is the most sublime lesson in the school of self-sacrifice. Many have laboured and suffered, the fruits of whose labours we are enabled to enjoy to-day. The glorious truths that we now find and accept at the threshold of any religious training, properly so called, for our guidance were not achieved in ease and comfort, but by many hard, trying and painful spiritual exercises, necessitating much self-denial and self-abnegation. It is a well known fact that there is no royal road to heaven. The road is narrow, rough and rugged. Yet this noblest course of life is not possible, for all and sundry. Such a life of utter self-sacrifice can only be lived by the few, who, having mastered their lower self, and killed all desire so to say, are only living for others with a mission or dispensation from God to lead the world to its destiny.

For the large majority, the mediocrities, treading their weary path in the various preliminary stages of self-improvement, the truth is given in its negative aspect, to wit, the avoidance of injury to others. Yet this is not the goal, not the ideal life, but rather it is a beginning and a small one, of the life eternal which forms man's ultimate destiny.

To the worldly wise man, the practical man

as he calls himself, much of the talk like this appears as "dignified nonsense" or exaggerated sentimentalism. In this world of keen competition and struggle for existence, says he, it is vain to let others prosper at your expense ; it is nothing short of suicidal ; it is folly to be kind where you—meaning one's own personality—lose.

Many are satisfied with this sophistry, but the world of to-day as a whole is too far advanced to accept this course. What right have we to injure another is the true vein in which the subject has to be approached. Is it your might ? But what if another has still greater might than you—and uses it against you ? What would be the result ? Constant strife, constant warrings with anarchy and chaos and disorganisation in its train. Society is far from what it ought to be and that because regrettably many remnants of barbarism are still clinging to it. But fortunately the efforts of all thoughtful and earnest workers are now turned towards the reorganization of society on a more humane and rational basis. Would that such an era of happy, affectionate and sympathetic living may shine in all its glory upon the distressed and afflicted humanity—and that right early !

## The Ultimate Destiny of Man

### I.—PRELIMINARY

The popular conception regarding the ultimate destiny of man is Moksha or Mukti, meaning release—release from *karmbandha*, the bondage of action, and release from *janmbandha*, the necessity of being born again and again. The Bhagwadgita hints at this, when beginning to impart the teaching about yoga, it introduces the subject by saying that “imbued with this knowledge, thou shalt cast away the bonds of action” (II, 39).

Reserving for the present the question as to the means by which *mukti* is to be attained we will confine our attention here to what man's state, according to the Bhagwadgita, is on attaining Moksha, which in itself conveys only a negative idea. The Bhagwadgita, referring to the two ancient paths in VIII, 23 to 26 gives an idea of this state in a nutshell by saying that, on one of these paths, man having known Brahman, goes to Brahman, while on the other, go those who have trodden this earth unsuccessfully are born here again. The graphic language in which the two paths have been described in the text, and specially the mystical suggestion that the attainment of either path depends upon the time at which a man dies, have been the source of trouble,

owing to the fact that they are very difficult to understand.

The fact of the matter is that the two paths are of Vedic origin, where they have been called *pitryana* ( the path of the *pitris* or ancestors ) and *devayana* ( the path of the Devas ), respectively, the idea being that when the body is cast off, the soul goes either to *pitriloka* the abode of the dead ancestors, to the majority, as we are used to say in our modern ways, or in case the soul has led the highly enlightened life on earth, it goes to the abode of the Devas, the shining ones. Naturally the one path is of darkness as compared with the other, which is truly of the light of Divinity (Rig Veda, X, 15, 88). In the Vedas, however, there are hymns addressed to *pitris*, the blessed dead who dwell in heaven, and they are invoked together with the Devas, and are supposed to come in the form of invisible spirits to receive prayers and offerings at *yajnas* (Rig Veda, X, 15, 54). This may be the basis of the later tradition of the ancestor-worship so much developed in Manusmriti and kept up to this day as the *pitri-yajna*, one of the five daily *yajnas*. The Bhagwadgita refers to this by saying that to the ancestors go the ancestor-worshippers, and My worshippers to Me, and further that

the ancestors deprived of the religious offering of food and water will fall (into hell) (IX, 25, & I, 42).

This second path, the *pitrayana*, is what now goes in Hinduism under the name of *swarga* or heaven, meant for those high-minded souls who living a life of virtue are not fortunate enough to reach the highest point of perfection. And there is indeed a third path, the lowest one, too contemptible to be mentioned along with the two higher ones. This is the path (in the sense of destiny) of those who have lived the life of utmost degradation and sinfulness in the world. In religious language this path receives the name of *narka* or hell; both these paths of heaven and hell have again this much in common that they are paths of return to this world, where men are born again and again, until, taking to the highest path, called the path of light and also the path of non-return, they reach Divinity and are born no more.

This repeated rebirth is, however, not by way of punishment, but for the only purpose of giving chance after chance for the fulfilment of the destiny that is man's birthright. "At the close of many births," says Shrikrishna, "the man full of wisdom cometh unto Me; Vasudeva is all, saith he, the Mahatma, very difficult to find" (VII, 19). As to the average righteous person, who has not fully

succeeded, the Bhagwadgita says, "Having attained to the worlds of the pure-doing, and having dwelt there for immemorial years, he who fell from Yoga is reborn in a pure and blessed house, or he may even be born into a family of wise Yogins. There, he recovereth the characteristics belonging to his former body and with these he again laboureth for perfection: by that former practice he is irresistibly led on, and working with earnest endeavour free from impurities, attains success after many births and reaches the supreme goal" (*param gatim*) (VI, 40 to 45). And as to the sinful persons, "bewildered by numerous thoughts, enmeshed in the web of delusion, addicted to the gratification of desires, they fall downwards into a foul hell" (XVI, 16).

The *swarga* of Hinduism is often likened to the heaven of other religions, which is not in fact correct. In Christianity heaven is the abode of the Most High, and living in heaven is living in the immediate presence of the Supreme Being—God, after, of course having earned salvation through the deliverance from original sin; in Islam *jannat* or heaven is the place of enjoyment secured through salvation (*najat*) from the effect of one's misdeeds on earth by means of suffering, penitence and God's grace. Islam gives a rather

sensuous description of the pleasures of *jannat*, but to Arabs, amongst whom Islam as such took its birth, addicted to wine and women, and lost in a craze for material comforts and luxuries, as they were, the description could not but be destined to go home; still care is taken to add that the drink sacred (*sharaban tahuran*) and the charming damsels (*houries*) shall partake none of the dross and baseness of the world, the reward, as they would be, of the good life led here.

In Hinduism the *swarga* is of course not meant for the *mukta*, the emancipated. It is only the "failures" of the world who enjoy but a temporary sojourn in *swarga* namely, those who have striven hard and well for their goal and yet have failed. And *swarga* is not a place of reward, even as *narka* (hell) is not one of punishment, nor is rebirth by way of retribution. All is a process of the natural working of the law of cause and effect summed up in the one word *karma*. *Swarga* being thus a state of the soul's life in which it has its opportunity for transmutation of its earthly acquirements into faculties in order that it may come again on earth by means of rebirth, fresh and renewed with stronger and better sinews of war to strive and succeed wherein it had failed before.

For the *mukta*, the emancipated, then the goal is other than *swarga*. The Bhagwadgita describes this goal in various ways. It is *padam anamayam*, literally painless state, otherwise called the state of bliss (II, 51). It is *sukham*, joy (IV, 40 and XVI, 23), *sukham akhshyam*, imperishable joy (V, 21), *sukham atyantkam*, *utmam*, supreme joy (VI, 21 and 27), *shantim*, happiness (V, 12, VI, 15), *shantim param*, supreme happiness (IV, 39 and XVIII, 62). It is also *param*, supreme (II, 59, III, 19, V, 16 and XVIII, 35), *gatim param*, *paramam*, *anuttmam*, highest path or goal (VI, 45; VII, 18; VIII, 10; 15 and 21, XIII, 29 and XVI, 22 and 23), *nishreya*, highest good (V, 2), *sthanum param adyam*, abode highest and primeval (VIII, 28) *shasvatam sthanum* everlasting abode (XVIII, 62). *Siddhim* (perfection) is another word very frequently used in the text to indicate the highest end of man, and this *siddhim* is described as the worship, through the performance of one's duties, of Him from Whom is the emanation of beings and by Whom all this is pervaded. It is also *naishkarma*, freedom from the obligation of action, as well as the attaining of Brahman which is the highest end of knowledge (III, 3 and 20; VI, 37 and 43 and XVIII 45 and 46, 49 and 50).

Buddhism has made us familiar with the term



*nirvana*, as the *summum bonum* of existence, and the Bhagwadgita also uses the same term as compounded with Brahman or without it, in that very sense (II, 72; V, 24 to 26 and VI, 15). This term as such does not appear to have been used in the religious literature of Hinduism before the Bhagwadgita, and it is therefore sometimes surmised that the latter borrowed it from Buddhism, which, it is also asserted, preceded the Bhagwadgita.

Now the Lord Buddha had either no faith in God and Soul (the eternal and permanent Self in man), or he did not consider this belief necessary (as in *Saṅkhya Darshana* about God) for his philosophy of what he called salvation or the final beatitude. To him what mattered most, as the great fact of unfailing common observation, was the existence of pain (*duḥkha*), so inextricably mixed up with life. And this pain could only cease, as taught by him, through *nirvana*; the whole philosophy of Buddhism being, therefore, occupied with laying down the many and various rules by which this pain could be ended. Thus the eight conditions are: right view, right judgment, right language, right purpose, right profession, right application, right memory and right meditation. The five fundamental precepts are: not to

kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, and not to give way to drunkenness. The six fundamental verities are: charity, purity, patience, courage, contemplation and knowledge. In none of these does any mention of the God-head enter.

Considering the literal meaning of *nirvana* as the "blowing out" (see Panini VIII, 2, 50), it has been remarked by many eminent writers that *nirvana* in Buddhism does not mean, as it is sometimes thought, the blowing out of the soul, *i. e.*, its mergence into God or the blessed fellowship with God either, but the blowing out or ending of human passions and desires, and the consequent attaining of peace and quiet, resulting in cessation of individual consciousness. But faith in Divinity is the cornerstone in the Bhagwadgita on which stands the whole structure of Hindu ethics and metaphysics, and whatever our views about the origin of the term *nirvana*, it is a fact that the Bhagwadgita does not use it in the sense in which early Buddhism at any rate may have used it. The Bhagwadgita, by coupling the term with Brahman, such as in *Brahman-nirvana*, certainly steers clear of any suggestion as to the Buddhistic notion of atheism. And we find it stated in Sanskrit dictionaries that *nirvana* and *moksha* mean one and the same thing.

For a further study of the *moksha* state in the Bhagwadgita, we must remember that throughout the Bhagwadgita, Shrikrishna, speaking of Himself in the first person in the position of Divinity, mentions Himself as the highest goal of man. It may, however, be stated by the way that Krishna, son of Devki, appears in the Chhandogya Upanishad, as the pupil of the Rishi Ghora Angirasa, from whom he received the following instruction : "At the time of death, one ought to take refuge in the three: Thou art the imperishable, Thou art the unchangeable, and Thou art the subtle *prana*," and it is said that Krishna became the thirstless by this teaching (III, 17, 6). And if Sayana's interpretation of the Vedas is to be trusted, the same Krishna, as the head of a pastoral tribe on the bank of the Jumna was worsted with his hosts of 10,000, in a battle with Indra (Rig Veda VIII, 85), while the later legends in the Bhagwata relate to Krishna's turning the Gopa tribe away from the worship of Indra and to his incurring Indra's indignation which resulted in the latter's sending incessant heavy rain, and Krishna's getting the better of him by lifting the Govardhana hill over the heads of Gopas and protecting them outright.

In the Mahabharat the deification of Shri-

krishna goes as an admitted fact. And in the Bhagwadgita, chapter 12, Shrikrishna inculcates the law that in order to teach and protect mankind, God does from time to time as piety (*dharma*) decays, and impiety (*adharma*) rules, descend as man and He affirms that He himself who appeared to Arjuna as one in human shape, though unborn, imperishable and Lord of beings, was there in pursuance of that law and had been there many times before (IV, 1 to 8). And as to the *Avatar* idea see remarks in *Guruism*, pp. 207 to 208.

It would then be missing the spirit of the Bhagwadgita to understand by Shrikrishna merely a historical person, born of Princess Devki. In fact, the Bhagwadgita would be ill-understood were we not to admit or assume the divinity of Shrikrishna. He is not only to be identified with what is in religious language called Ishwara, the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe, but with what in the phraseology of the Upanishads goes as the Eternal Brāhman. In fact the two conceptions are inextricably connected together in the Bhagwadgita (II, 71 ; IV, 6 and 8 ; V, 10, 17 and 24 ; VI, 15).

## II.—Metaphysical

For a right appreciation of the *Moksha* state in the Bhagwadgita, it is necessary for us to have an adequate idea of its metaphysics. In the 7th chapter Shrikrishna, with the object of imparting full knowledge regarding Himself, says that the whole of the material existence, considered in a particularly wide sense so as to include in it even mind, understanding and egoism (*manas*, *buddhi* and *ahankara*) is His lower *prakṛiti* (nature), while the spirit of life element (*jivbhutam*) is His higher *prakṛiti*, and that He Himself is the origin and the dissolution of the universe; and the greatest of the great into Whom is strung everything like pearls into a thread (VII, 4 to 6). Thus God is the Creator of the whole universe, call it conscious or unconscious, Purusha or Prakriti spirit or matter whichever you please.

Though the Bhagwadgita makes frequent references to the Sankhya philosophy and relies on it especially with regard to the material creation being the product of the primal principle the *prakṛiti*, or more appropriately the lower *prakṛiti* of the above passage, (III, 27 and 28 and XIII, 20 and 30), yet it is not to be assumed that the Bhagwadgita is at one in all respects with the Sankhya system of philosophy, as now

known in the name of Kapila. One fundamental difference apparent on the face of it is that Kapila posits no God for the purpose of his philosophy, and that his *purusha* and *prakṛiti* stand as the two uncreate principles quite independent of and apart from each other. Possibly the Sankhya philosophy at the time of the Bhagwad-gita did not exist in the form in which we now find it.

According to the present day Sankhya, the *purushas* are many and *prakṛiti* is one, and from the combination of the two emanates the whole of creation. But the Bhagwadgita, apparently not believing in the manyness of *purushas*, would posit two entities both proceeding from God--the one, as His higher *prakṛiti* being the fountain of the life-energy, and the other, as His lower *prakṛiti*, giving rise to what may be called the finite material existences. *Purusha* is in fact one and not many; He is called the Maheshwara, the Great Lord. *Paramatma*, the Highest Self, also *Purusha Para*, the Supreme *Purusha* (XIII, 22). The same *purusha* looks many, as the various individual souls, when he is bound up with the *prakṛiti*, as seated in the body, and then enjoys (experiences) the *gunas* of *prakṛiti*, the reason being his connection with the *gunas* due to his birth in good

and evil wombs (XIII, 21). It is this Purusha the Atma the dweller in the body, spoken of as the immortal one, who is neither slain nor slays and who is neither born nor doth he die, nor having been, ceaseth he any more to be, unborn, perpetual, eternal, ancient and unmanifest (II, 19, 20 and 25).

Further, the body is called the field (*khetra*) and the individual soul, the knower of the field; (*khetrajna*), while God as the over-soul, is called the knower of the field (*Kshetrajna*) in all fields, thus indicating the essential identity of God and soul (XIII, 2 and 3).

Again, *Prakṛiti* as the unmanifest (*avyaktam*) is, in a picturesque passage, described as the entity from which the whole creation emanates in Brahma's day, and to which it dissolves in Brahma's night; but there is another higher unmanifest, it is declared, which is eternal, and which in the destroying of all is never destroyed. That Unmanifest (*Avyaktam*), the Indestructible (*Aksharam*) is the highest goal from which there is no return. That is "My Supreme Abode" (VIII, 16 to 21).

And again, "By Me, all this universe is pervaded, in My unmanifest aspect all beings have root in Me, not I in them; as the mighty air moving everywhere is rooted in ether, so all beings rest rooted

in Me ; and at the end of a world-age (*kālpā*) they enter My *Prakṛiti*, and at the beginning of a world-age again I emanate them, hidden in My *Prakṛiti* I emanate them again and again (IX, 4 to 8).  
 "As the omnipresent ether is not affected by reason of its subtlety, so seated everywhere in the body the *atma* (self) is not affected. As the one sun illumineth the whole earth so the Lord of the field (*Kshetrajña*) illumineth the whole field (*kṣhetra*)" (XIII, 33 and 34).

In Chapter XV, God is called the *Purusha Adyam*, (the Primal Being), whence the ancient energy (*pravṛiti*, the cause of manifestation) streamed forth. Beyond the two *purushas* called the *kṣhara* (perishable) and the *akṣhara* (imperishable) is the Supreme *Purusha*, (the *Purush Uttama*), the Supreme Being (*Param Atma*), who, having entered the three worlds, supports them as the inexhaustible *Ishwara*. This *Purush Uttama* is no other than the "I" (Shrikrishna) who is said to transcend the two *Purushas* first mentioned which *purushas*, in the very mystical or peculiar language of the Bhagwadgita, that at times indulges in play upon words, may probably refer either to the lower and higher *prakṛiti* of VII, 4 and 5 that is, to *prakṛiti* and the individual souls, or to the lower *prakṛiti* and its products the finite existences (XV,



16 to 18). And in a remarkable passage about here (XV, 7) it is said that an eternal part of Myself (*Mam ansha*), having become the individual soul (*jivbhuta*), draws to itself the senses and the mind and obtains a body (*shariram*).

Much debate has however centered round this verse between Shankara and Ramanuja on account of the different view-points in their respective systems, the latter considering the individual soul to be the real part of God, and the former insisting that *ansa* or part indicates an imaginary or apparent part only, even as, according to him, the world and what is called the personal God (*Ishwara*) are imaginary or apparent.

In the Bhagwadgita the immanence of God is very much emphasised (cf. VII, 8 to 12 ; IX, 16 and 19 ; X, 8 and 20 to 42 ; XI (whole) and XV, 12 to 15). To cite a few striking passages culled at random. Says Shrikrishna :

I am the sapidity in waters, the radiance in moon and sun, sound in ether, virility in men, the eternal seed of all beings. I am the father of the universe, the mother, supporter, grandsire, husband, lord, abode ; the source of all things, the selfseated in the heart of beings, Vasva of the Devas, Pavaka of the Vasus, Prahlada of the Daityas, the gambling of the cheat and the truth of the truthful ; having pervaded the universe with one fragment of Myself I remain.

Thus God pervades everything in the world and identifies Himself with every thing. This may be pantheism which under certain prevalent notions of the West has come in for much of criticism. Pantheism, they say, is either losing God in the world or the world in God. But Hindu Pantheism is neither. According to the Bhagwadgita God is both immanent and transcendent. "The universe," it is said, "is only a fragment (*ekam ansha*) of Myself" (X, 42). The individual soul too is a part of Myself (*mam ansha*) (XV, 7). This teaching has its origin in the Vedas. In the Purush Sukta of the Rig Veda (X, 90) it is stated that all beings are a fourth of the *Purusha*, while the other three-fourths remain immortal in the shining regions. There are many such passages in the Upanishads. The Bhagwadgita stresses this point. Having said at length how God is immanent, care is taken to add that "I transcend all these" (XV, 18). Having said that "I pervade all the universe," it is also said that "I am in them and not they in me" (VII, 11 and IX, 4). Thus God is not exhausted by His pervading this universe.

In the 11th chapter of the Bhagwadgita is raised a very important and interesting question, namely, whether God is to be worshipped in His

manifest aspect, such as comes out in the conception of the personal God, or Ishwara—God with His attributes, the active principle governing the world,—or whether He is to be worshipped in His unmanifest aspect, the absolute Brahman, conceived as *Nirgunam*, without attributes and relations, as neither *sat* or *asat* (being nor non-being). Both these aspects have been brought out in the previous chapters though the latter aspect has only received a passing reference. For instance, Shrikrishna, dwelling on the immanent aspect, says, “I am being and non-being” (*sat* and *asat*), (IX, 19), and Arjuna, having seen the Universal Form (*Vishvarupa*), in an exulting song of adoration addresses the Divinity as being and non-being (XI, 37). In a subsequent chapter too the Divinity is again stated as being and non-being, without qualities (*nirgunam*), yet enjoying qualities (*guna-bhoktri*), indivisible, yet divided (*avibhaktam vebhaktamiv*) (XIII, 13, 15 and 17). Also the text dwelling on the unmanifest, imperishable (*avyaktam aksharam*) Atma, the dweller in the body (II, 17 to 30) points to the idea of the one absolute Brahman, the impersonal God.

Later philosophies, many many centuries after the Bhagwadgita, drifted into a sectarian attitude,

laying stress on one or other aspect of Divinity, and parted company, as a result of which we now have the two main schools of thought. One, headed by Shankara, affirms the sole reality of the one absolute Brahman, granting no reality to soul and world, allowing them both only an empirical reality which, it is considered, is due only to ignorance technically called *maya* and which vanishes as soon as the veil of *maya* is lifted by the attainment of knowledge (*jnana*). The other, headed by Ramanuja, posits the three real distinct entities, the conscious soul (*jiva*) and the unconscious *prakṛiti* (matter) which make the body of God, (*Ishwara*) the third ; *bhakti* or devotion to *Ishwara* being the sole method of attaining *moksha* according to this school. The former is called the school of absolute monism (*adwaita*), the latter, the school of modified monism (*vishishtā adwaita*) popularly known as *vaishnavism*.

Both claim to be based on the ancient literature, the Vedic Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanishads. Undoubtedly the Vedas mention both the aspects (personal and impersonal) of Divinity, though without the paraphernalia of the later philosophies. These schools of thought, on account of the special sanctity attached to the Bhagwadgita being akin to

the Vedas, make gigantic efforts each to suit its respective creed to the Bhagwadgita even to the extent of outraging the text. The Bhagwadgita too, though catholic in character, is capable of such manipulations in interpretation, not only because of the Sanskrit words carrying wide and capacious meanings, but also because of the peculiar circumstance of the Bhagwadgita not using the same word or term in the same sense always.

In our own times each of these philosophies finds its supporter in an eminent oriental scholar. Professor Deussen who has done so much to popularise Vedant in Europe, follows Shankara in thinking that God alone is real, and that creation has no existence at all. And this he considers to have been also the creed of Plato long before Shankara, and of Kant and Schopenhauer in modern times. He would explain away the conflicting text by saying that it refers to only the empirical reality of the universe. Professor Grabe, who, following Ramanuja and others like him, considers that the Bhagwadgita concerns itself only with devotion (*bhakti*) to the personal God (Ishwara), is so much upset at the verses that are contrary to this view and especially those which, by speaking of the individual soul becoming one

with Brahman, seem to take Shankara's viewpoint of absolute monism (V, 15), that he is inclined to cast aside as interpolations many verses, nearly 200 in all, that seem to him to be inconsistent with the full implications of *Vaishnavism* whose cause he espouses.

This rather high-handed method of disposing of the disagreeable text is no better than the orthodox one adopted by Shankara and others, who, while retaining the text in order to keep with the tradition, would so outrage its meaning as to get out of it all they want to bolster up their particular creed. Scholarly research has, however, established beyond the possibility of doubt that the 700 verses now found in the Bhagwadgita remain intact. (Telang on the B. G. Intro., p. 35).

The Bhagwadgita, while inculcating the personal and impersonal conceptions of Divinity, would leave to the individual temperament, as based on individual culture, the question of the preference of one or other as a path of redemption. Both the paths, it is said, lead to one and the same goal, but the lot of those who are set on the impersonal, *i. e.*, the imperishable (*akṣharam*), unmanifest (*avyaktam*), unthinkable (*achintyam*), is very hard indeed, while the other

path, being that of the personal aspect of God, is comparatively easy and best-suited to common humanity and hence it is popular (XII, 2 to 5).

In all its attitude towards the conception of Divinity, the Bhagwadgita seems to be at one with the Vedic literature. The one personal God, both, immanent and transcendent, is called in the Vedas by many names. He is spoken of as Vāruna, the Just, the Compassionate, and the Good, Vishve Devah, the Lord of the universe, Vishve Karman, the Maker of the universe, Prajapati, the Lord of creatures, Hiranyagarbha, the Golden egg, (Rig Veda, X, 4, 43, 72, 81, 82, 85, 121, 184 and 189). The conception of the impersonal God called the "it" to indicate its sexlessness is also there. Take the well-known *Nasadiya* hymn containing the most advanced theory of creation (Rig Veda X, 121) :

"There was neither what is, nor what is not, (*sat asat*). There was not death, hence there was nothing immortal. There was no light between night and day. That one breathed by itself without breath, other than it there had been nothing. Darkness there was, in the beginning all this was a sea without light; the germ that lay covered by the husk, that one was born by Tapas. Love overcame it in the

beginning which was the seed springing in the mind, poets have searched it in the heart found by wisdom, the bond of what is, in what is not."

Thus the first principle of creation is neither existence nor non-existence, for nothing else exists with or before Him. That is the Impersonal One, the absolute or unrelated who forms the background of the whole existence. Within the absolute consciousness, there is first the fact of affirmation or positing of the primal I, and immediately with this there must be the ego as the correlate of non-ego. This is the primary antithesis from which all proceeds. The development of this antithesis is said to be due to *tapas*, the spontaneous outgrowth, the projection of being into existence, the innate fervour of the absolute. That gives rise to the active Purusha, the formative principle and the chaotic matter *prakṛiti*, with which God is said in the religious (not metaphysical) language to have fashioned the world. It would be difficult to call this, Prakṛiti the pre-existing material, worked out by God for creation.

"Personality," says Prof. Radha Krishnan in Indian Philosophy (p. 97), "implies the distinction of self and not-self, and hence it is inapplicable to the Being who includes and embraces all that is. The personal God is the symbol of the true



living God. The formless is given a form, the impersonal is made personal, the omnipresent is fixed to a local habitation, the eternal is given a temporary setting. The moment we reduce the Absolute to the object of worship it becomes something less than the Absolute. To have a practical relationship with finite will, God must be less than the Absolute, but if He is less than the Absolute, then He cannot be the object of worship in any effective religion. If God is perfect, religion is impossible, if God is imperfect, religion is ineffective. With a finite limited God we cannot have the joy of peace, the assurance of victory and the confidence in the ultimate destiny of the universe. True religion requires the Absolute. Hence to meet the demands of both popular religion and philosophy, the absolute spirit is indiscriminately called He or it. It is so in the Upanishads. It is so in the Bhagwad-gita and the Vedant Sutras."

In the Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda (X, 10) we have another description of the creation according to which the act of creation is *yajna* (sacrifice) in which the Purusha is the victim. It is a poetic description pointing out the oneness of the whole world and God. It is not inconsistent with the theory of the creation from the one

Absolute, as the world is the "self-diremption of the Absolute into subject and object, *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti*."

But how is this self-diremption of the Absolute? This is a question that is never answered; for the intellectual levels from which we ask it are inadequate to solve it. Our limited intellect cannot go beyond the bounds of time, space and cause, nor can we explain these, since every attempt to explain them assumes them. Though the Absolute Being is not known in the logical way, yet it can be known by all who endeavour to know the truth as the Reality in which we live, move and have our being. Spiritual things require to be spiritually discerned.

Man has the faculty of divine insight or mystic intuition by which he transcends the distinctions of intellect and solves the riddles of reason. By this intuitive realisation, according to the Upanishads, "the unheard becomes heard, the unperceived becomes perceived and the unknown becomes known" (Chhandogya VI, 13). Let us not, however, suppose that the conception of the personal God, the *Purush Uttma*, is a wilful self-deception accepted by the weak heart of man. Spiritual intuition reveals to us a Reality which is both impersonal and personal. The two are not

to be seen apart as standing in opposition to each other. Only the personal is envisaged or focussed in the impersonal (Prof. Radha Krishnan.)

The Bhagwadgita, as also the Vedas, nowhere assert the unreality of the world of change. There is none of the *maya* theory of the Shankara school in them. Maya is the *shakti* or power of Ishwara by which He produces all. (Rig Veda, X, 54, 2). The main tendency of the Vedas is quite clear. The Upanishads stress the unreality of the world at times when they are thinking of God as its sole cause, thus suggesting the relative unreality of the world, since cause is more real than the effect.

### III.—Ethical

What is then the condition of the individual soul in the *mukta* state? On this again there is a difference of view-point. It is indicated in the Bhagwadgita that the freed soul, on abandoning the body, cometh unto Me, *mam avaiti, mam yati, mam upeta, mam prapadyate* (VII, 19 and 23; VIII, 15 and 16; IX, 25, 28 and 34; X, 10 and XVIII, 68); entereth into My Being, *mad bhavam aghatah, mad bhavam yanti* (IV, 10; VIII, 5 and 7 and IX, 19); goeth to, or reacheth or obtaineth Brahman, *i. e.*, the supreme divine Purusha; is established in or

contacted with Brahman ( IV, 31 ; V, 6, 19 and 20 ; VI, 28 ; VIII, 8, 10 and 24 ; XIII, 3 and XVIII, 50) ; is not born again even at creation, and attaineth to equality of attributes with Me (IX 2) ; and lastly, becomes Brahman (*Brahman bhuta*, *Brahman bhuyae k̐alpate* (V, 24 ; VI, 27 ; IX, 26 and XVIII, 53 and 54).

• Shankara, the advocate of the doctrine of the sole reality of *atma*, the Self, takes the text to mean that the soul in the *muḁta* state absolutely merges in Brahman, which it is in essence ; while Ramanuja, the advocate of the personal conception of Divinity, does not necessarily find in the above passages any idea of the obliteration of the individuality, for according to him the text is quite consistent with the idea of *muḁti* being a state of blissful freedom of the soul, with a distinct existence of its own in the presence of God. The *muḁta*, soul, he insists, attains to the status of God but is not literally merged in Him. The Bhagwadgita, as it countenances both the conceptions of Divinity, personal and impersonal, lends support to either view about the ultimate state of the individual soul. The difference is not real, it is a matter of opinion only. For a concept of the personal God, the distinct individuality of the soul in the *muḁta* state, though with full visualisa-

tion of its oneness with God, is necessary, while for an impersonal concept of Divinity, the question of the separateness of the soul hardly arises, as the absolute oneness of all is realised as soon as the impersonal concept is a *fait accompli*, and no longer a mere theoretical notion.

The Bhagwadgita recognises the attainment of *mukṭi* in the embodied state of the soul, and that being so, the question arises as to what is its condition then. About this again differences have arisen due to difference in view-point. According to Shankara, all activity is unthinkable in the *mukṭa* state which he calls the state of the highest enlightenment, wisdom or *jnana*, and he cites in support of his opinion passages of the Bhagwadgita such as "All action culminates in wisdom" (*Sarva karm akhilaṃ jnane samapyate* (IV, 33). As however, action cannot be absolutely avoided so long as there is the body, Shankara's resort to the explanation of what minimum activity is needed to maintain the body, is the Sankhya theory, according to which *prakṛiti* alone acts and not the Purusha, who, in the *mukṭa* state, is absolutely unallied to *prakṛiti*. All activity is then mechanical and does not affect the Self or soul.

According to Ramanuja and others of the Vaishnava school, activity in the *mukṭa* state is

not prohibited, but now it assumes a higher aspect, in that the motive is never anything selfish; all activity is for the welfare and uplift of mankind, *Lok Sangrah* (B. G., III, 20) and in co-operation with the Divine Will. Performing the prescribed duties with such motive, it is said in the Bhagwadgita, such a man has no interest in the things done in the world, nor any in things not done, nor doth any object of his depend on any being (III, 18), and, therefore, without attachment, he performs action which is duty (III, 19) even as God Himself engages in action to keep the world going (III, 22 to 24).

Corresponding to the three well-known divisions of the human mind in psychology, there exist in Hinduism three traditional paths to the goal, namely, the paths of wisdom (*jnana*), love (*bhakti*) and action (*karma*). The adherents of particular creeds give preference to one or other of these paths. For instance, Shankara gives preference to that of wisdom and Ramanuja to that of devotion, both giving a subordinate place to action, though each with a different motive. The Bhagwadgita, as it recognises a multitude of paths all leading to the one goal, gives no preferential value to any of the paths. To it, all is a matter of temperamental attitude. For it is said, "How-

ever men approach Me, even so do I welcome them, as the path men take from every side is Mine" (IV, 11). Again, "Place thy mind in Me, and if thou art not able to do so, then resort to practice (*Abhyasa yoga*) and if thou art not equal to that even, then do all action for My sake, and even if this is hard, then do thy duty, renouncing the fruit of action" (XI, 9 to 11). And yet again, "The *mahatmas* (high-souled) worship Me unwaveringly, ever adoring, glorifying Me in devotion (*bhakti*); others also worship Me by performing wisdom-sacrifice (*jnana-yajna*)" (IX, 13 to 15).

There are, however, passages open to discussion. "Better," it is said, "is wisdom-sacrifice (*jnana-yajna*) than the sacrifice of objects (*drabya-yajna*)" (IV, 33). Again, "The yogi is higher than the ascetic (*tapavi*), higher even than the wise (*jnani*), or even the man of action (*karmi*)" (VI, 46). Confusion is increased when it is said, that wisdom (*jnana*) is better than practice (*abhyasa*), meditation (*dhyana*) is better than wisdom, and renunciation of the fruit of action (*karm phala tyaga*) is better even than meditation (XII, 12). Lastly, we have, "Abandoning all *dharmas*, (possibly referring to all methods other than that of devotion, as the followers of that path have claim-

ed), come unto Me for shelter, sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins" (XVIII, 66).

The fact of the matter evidently is that words are not used in the same sense always. Wisdom (*jnana*) as an end in the sense of complete enlightenment, is to be distinguished from wisdom as the method. In the one sense it may be superior to everything and in another it may lose its special significance. Similarly Yoga may stand as an end in itself, akin to *jnana*, meaning final enlightenment, and it may also refer to a particular method such as that of the *nishkāma karma*, disinterested action, in which sense it is so often used in the Bhagwadgita, or it may merely refer to concentration, as in Patanjali's Yoga (see II, 39, 48 and 50; III, I and V, 12). Yoga is also used in the sense of the acquisition of worldly goods as well as of divine power in IX, 5, 22. Moreover, there is in the Bhagwadgita the poetic tendency to admire rather superlatively the particular method being dealt with, and the safer way to find the truth in the Bhagwadgita, as also in the case of any other scripture, is to read the context as a whole.

The three paths are not, however, quite exclusive of one another, they are only so known by virtue of the predominance of one or other of the three elements of knowledge, emotion and will.



The Bhagwadgita knows no fundamental difference between these paths, and to it, "It is children who make a distinction between *sankhya* and *yoga* (knowledge and action); he who is established in one obtains the fruit of both. That place which is reached by one is reached by the other also. He seeth who seeth that *sankhya* and *yoga* are one" (V, 4 and 5). It is therefore inconceivable that a person perfected in *jnana* should not have in him the fountain-spring of the joy and the ecstasy of the true *bhakta* and be not also endowed with the impulse to action of a *karma yogi*. Similarly must one who has found the goal along the path of devotion be possessed of the gift of that insight into truth which is the be-all and end-all of a *jnani*; and he must also be filled with the zest and zeal for doing all work, albeit to please and serve the Lord only. And the man whose only pursuit in life has been the performance of his duties and the service of mankind in obedience to the Lord, must at the pinnacle of his noble career, win the triumph of life enlightened and bliss unending. May be the *jnani* and the *bhakta*, avoiding all worry about the concerns of the world, at times prefer to live a life of calm and quiet in absolute seclusion, yet who can deny that they have within them, even

in their retirement, the overflowing milk of human love and compassion that is an essential feature of a life which sees all in God and God in all ?

The Bhagwadgita, without mentioning any of these paths as such, gives in various passages scattered over all the eighteen chapters, a charming description of the life of ethical idealism, as resulting at the fruition of any of these paths and as lived by the *jivan-mukta*, the freed soul while still in this body. He is *gun-atita*, (above the *gunas* or qualities of matter (II, 45 and IX, 21 to 25) ; *stitha-prajna*, stable minded, *samadh-istha*, steadfast in contemplation (II, 54 to 72) ; *nir-duanda*, free from the pairs of opposites, such as pleasure and pain, honor and dishonor, heat and cold, *mahatma*, high-souled (VII, 19), *tattva-darshi*, seer of the essence of things, and so forth (II, 16 and IV, 34). Such a one differentiates the real from the unreal, the permanent from the fleeting, the substance from the shadow, the grain from the chaff, being from non-being, the Self from the not-self (*atma* and *anatma*), and he realises, not merely intellectually, the fundamental unity in the midst of seeming variety ; in fact he sees the whole, and not merely a part of Truth (II, 11 to 30 and XVIII, 20 to 22).

He sees his Self abiding in all beings, he

looks equally on a learned Brahman, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an out-cast; he bears no ill-will to any being, he is alike to friend and foe, and he is intent upon the welfare of all and is full of very deep compassion (IV, 35; V, 7 and 18; VI, 29 and XII, 13 to 18). He is happy within, rejoiceth within, is illuminated within, seeth the Self by the Self, and in the Self is satisfied (III, 17; V, 24 and VI, 20). He is absolutely God-turned, knowing Him as the imperishable source of beings, adoring Him alone, worshipping Him with his whole being, seeing Him everywhere and everything in Him (VI, 28 to 32, and 47; IX, 13 and 14 and XV, 19). He is fixed in Him, performs all *yajna* for His sake, renders homage to Him and prostrates before Him alone (IX, 39 and XVIII, 65).

He realises His greatness and sovereignty in all (X, 7, 18 and 39). He has a vision of His *Vishvarupa*, or Universal Form. (XI, 15 and 13). Blessed with *daivi sampadi*, the Divine nature, he is fearless, pure, charitable, magnanimous, harmless, humble, straightforward, true, sincere, etc. (XVI, 1 to 3). He has transcended the qualities or *gunas* of matter (*sat, raj* and *tam*). He is established in *sattava* (purity), takes pure food, is pure in body, mind and speech, is moderate (*yuṅkta*) in eating,

sleeping, walking, amusement and every other affair of life (VI, 16 and 17 ; XVII, 4 to 23 and II, 45). His devotion to God (*bhakti*) is *nirantra* (undivided) and *nirhetuka* (unmotivated), and he is imbued with *jnana* (wisdom), for devotion without wisdom is empty sentimentalism (VII, 18&VIII, 14).

He need not forsake domestic life and don the garb of a *sanyasin* (recluse) ; what is important is mental renunciation. His business is with action only and never with its fruits (III, 47 ; VI, 1 and XVIII, 2). Civil obligations may not, therefore, be shunned. The key to all right doing is that all actions should be surrendered to the Lord, and dedicated to Him (III, 30 ; V, 10 ; IX, 27 and XVIII, 57). It should then appear that the Self is not the doer ; there is no agent other than the qualities (III, 27, and IX, 19) ; the will of man and the will of God are one, not two ; there is perfect at-one-ment, and it is clear that "the Lord (Ishwara), seated in the heart of all beings, causes by His power (*maya*) all beings to revolve as though mounted on a potter's wheel" (XVIII, 61). Man then does what God wishes him to do, and so does he bravely fight the battle of life, even as the enlightened Arjuna, at the close of the Bhagwad-gita instruction, engaged in the great war assuring the Lord, "I will do Thy bidding" (XVIII, 73).

## CORRIGENDA

Page	Line	For	Read
256	21	gain	grain
286	24	selfseated	self seated
287	25	11th	12th
290	13	ao	as
290	21	Grabe	Garbe

NOTE.—It is seldom possible to be altogether safe against the printer's devil, specially in a large work such as this. But the very few errors that exist point to the careful execution of the work in general. The indulgent reader is requested to kindly make the necessary corrections.





